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FROM THE SOUL OF THE TI-TREE

EDWINA GEACH

1909

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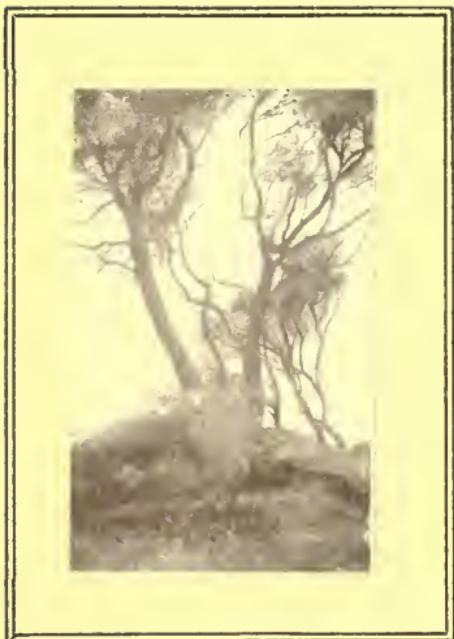
The Soul of the Ti-Tree

BY

EDWINA C. GEACH

PUBLISHED BY
THOMAS C. LOTHIAN, AT 226 LITTLE COLLINS ST.,
MELBOURNE.

1909.



“Where Heaven touches Earth.”

FOREWORD.

Centuries back, in the ti-tree groves dwelled a fair wood-maiden, slight and graceful of form. To and fro she moved amongst the fairies and pixies and sprites who inhabited the groves, and by all was she beloved, and to all went out her heart in return. And in the fulness of time the maiden was called to take her place amongst the children of men, and in the world of men she moved, and went hither and thither, and acted her part as a daughter of the world of men; but her heart was ever with her kinsmen of the ti-tree, and ever and anon she returned to them and passed up and down the aisles of the ti-tree by the seashore. And as she passed, the trees, feeling her presence, bent towards her, and would fain have called her back to them and have kept her amongst them, for they loved her. And the maiden, feeling their yearning and their caresses, gave them back love for love, with a love passionate and tender and undying, and the gnarled and twisted trunks were caressed, and held by her, as something sacred and holy. And, as time passed, the cry of the trees became stronger and stronger, until at last it could no longer be resisted, and the wood-maiden was fain to obey the call and to return once again to her own people. Regretfully and sadly she went, for amongst the people of the world were those whom she loved, and who had need of her and loved her. But the call of the trees was too urgent, and she went, as her way led, back to the peoples of the tree world. After her departure there were found certain writings, which she had made about the world that is in the midst of the ti-tree, and about the world that is the world of men, and about the world that was in the centre of her own being. These writings, coming from the heart of a woman, true and tender and compassionate, are now made into a book, so that they may be read by those who knew her and loved her, and by those who, loving the trees and the earth and the sea, would also have loved this maiden from the land of the ti-tree had their paths crossed hers.

“Truly we are all one. It is a common tongue we speak, though the wave has its own whisper, and the wind its own sigh, and the lip of man its word, and the heart of woman its silence.”

FIONA MACLEOD.

INTRODUCTORY.

The contents of this little volume have been for the most part taken from various MS. left unrevised by the authoress. Some few of the sketches contained here have merely, however, been published in the writer's lifetime, fugitively and under *noms de plume*. To the several journals in which these appeared acknowledgments are made.

Fugitive, indeed, were the writings, often scribbled, and left as written, in pencil, the unrehearsed and unrevised outcome of a spontaneous mood. "The recurring mood makes character, and indicates the soul." Thus the editors, in selecting from many these few sketches, have sought to show the writer—or allow her to reveal herself—in some of the most characteristic phases of her personality. Her deep and passionate love of nature, especially of seashore nature, is indicated in several of the sketches; and in others her love of humanity—an all-embracing tenderness—including such "as fall among the thorns."

As her delicate fancy and her humanity are suggested in some of these pages, so in others the writer's vein of analogy and allegory is evident, and suggests the fact that her love of the beautiful world about her was no mere worship of the senses. To her there was infinity in the tiniest "fairy slipper" of the ti-tree grove.

On Christmas morning, 1905, she passed away from the Mortalities, leaving but the earnest of that which she might have done. Those who knew her best are poorer for the withdrawal of an unique personality, and to such something of her elusive charm may be felt again in reading these fragments of her pen, and it may e'en be that something of her may also be felt in these few sketches by some who knew her not in life.

Printed by BROWN, PRIOR & Co.,
at 165-171 Queen Street, Melbourne.

An Elfin Land.

The Elfin Land is known of its lovers. It has no garden fashioned by the hand of man; no tape has measured the boundlessness of this domain; no impertinence of sign posts is in these groves. Here only come her lovers, and they cannot lose themselves.

To enter here, the mortal must put on immortality, and be even the unreal—be a spirit, a shadow, then into the strange fairyland of the groves of winding walks shall he pass; away from that outer world that lies beyond the fringe of this. There is a sweet gravity, and a tender welcome in the very air, as though something were weaving spells of lovely thoughts; and as though an enchanter's hand were translating them for the beloved of Nature to read. The beloved of Nature! How sweet to be of these, to have welcome to her heart; from her threshold to be drawn in, in to her inmost sanctuary, to have overflowing feast of her beauty and her mysticism.

How at that gateway leading to her most secret aisles care falls off the earth-worn soul. How the heart softens, and the bitterness of the life-draught is sweetened; what healing in those kind hands that touch the scars and wounds of many failures. Oh, place apart in graciousness and beauty! The last retreat on earth of those First Little Folk who once possessed it all. It is enchanted, this ti-tree land; it is not human; its people are invisible—save for the hour that you become one of them. Then freely you may walk with the gnomes and elves; or, from the crevices of their green houses, they look out upon you, frightened for a moment till they recognise you, because of the ruthless hand of man, the robber of their wide estate. Rest secure, sweet, wild children, in your homes; old-world children, I love you; take me through your dim aisles and your mysterious green

ways! So comes the wanderer from the World of Noise.

The whole place is full of curious whisperings, and the queer little faces look out at me from every tree bole—quite friendly now; queer little figures sway themselves on the fronds of the bracken fern. Reverently I move amongst them, along the moss-carpeted floor of the house of my Little Folk. I pause and look within the parlour where they dance at dawn, and where the tiny, dainty slippers they danced in overnight stand still upon the floor, glistening now, tipt by the peeping noonday sun. Have I not also found their tables set—little round tables that spring up in a night, some yellow, some white, some again deepest red; and for use on rainy days, the plainer brown? Have I not seen the spiders busy spinning their loveliest webs that they might be ready for the dew to turn them into diamond nets, that shall suit a fairy's use?

And I have found the tender tracery of green, so fragile, so beautiful in its trailing, that only fairy hands could have hung it on the ti-tree. There are the strangely-curved lilac flowers in low bushes; the heather, deepest pink, that holds cheery converse with its neighbours; the shy, pale green fuchsia, that scarce dares lift its white-lined leaves to the breeze; how close the green bells nestle to the stem. All these are of the fairies.

And in the innermost place of all, decked with pure white heather flowers, stands the altar of this sacred land. This even Nature's devotees approach humbly, and with reverent mien; and of the rites performed thereon I may not tell. . . .

I pass into the thicker ti-tree fringe along the cliff, and fling me down, with head reclined on the lap of Mother Earth, to think, and gaze, and dream, but most of all to dream.

Oh, beautiful trees! How long have you leant landward, away from the stormy waters? The sea has been harsh to you, and yet her rough breath has given you your own peculiar grace. Or is it that she has given you secrets?

Is it that you lean forward in your efforts to impart them to the land?

When the wind is high they strive to speak something, some great message, surely, for they moan with almost human agony. How weirdly the twisted trunks go swaying in the wind. Or is it that they pine for human sympathy? Do not their arms reach out frantically toward one, as though they would be one with us? Or—how dull I have been—is it not that each ti-tree was once a nymph, and passed from living body to living tree; prisoned thus by some evil Gnome King? Ah! the cries that the wind wrings from them; and there is none to face the dragon and to free them; only the innocent and faithful elves that haunt the place to mitigate their doom.

But when the wind is low and soft they are happy, these caged beings; when the heather-scented breeze comes from the Dandenongs, then the rhythm of the slow, swaying branches is a song of happy, deep content. Their sorrows are soothed into forgetfulness. No more delirium of agony, till again the fierce storms howl from the ocean—then again their cries and sobs.

And under all the growth of larger tree, in storm and quiet, lies on the lower carpet of sand, millions of dead leaves, that make a springy foot-mat. On the brown earth the sunlight lies in rarest patines; he can but filter through on the wealth of brown leaf, the fallen of many years. And in this land of sweet content some of the dead leaves murmur, as they lie, at the delicate pencilled twigs above them, that are green and take the golden light; “Let the sun shine stronger upon us that we may live again; you hide him from us.”

And the green leaves answer, “Be at peace. Ye have lived and loved; soon the wind will kiss us roughly, and we, too, will lie brown and silent on the quiet earth.”

Then for that time the brown leaves murmur no more, but enjoy the things that are about them. There are fairy slippers there, too, oh, so elfishly small; and under the

round, green heath bushes that cling, (because they love her), to the brown earth, I have seen strange, gleaming lamps of red.

It is when these shine out that the green leaves, enamoured, cry, "Kiss us roughly, oh wind, till we go to share this sweet wonder." So call the children of the earth to their mother. So even in this enchanted land is played the eternal drama of Birth and Death—and again Birth.

I draw a branch of the green, waving ti-tree to my face. I hold it there; and then for a space I look around at my dominion. "Farewell," I breathe, "once more farewell. Again and again will I come." Oh, land of silence and of mystery; let me for ever learn of thee within thine own invisible walls; place of feeling, thought, and dream, thou ti-tree region of the shore!

Death, the Democrat.

- “Life played with the loose sand of the desert. Now she made a mound heaped high. Now one, low, and laughed as she heard the pride of the high, and the murmuring of the low.
- “Death passed by, and the wind from his flowing robe, levelled all the heaps,—and then, too, Death smiled.”

—From the Arabian.

“Robert, Lord de Ros. (1245).”

So ran the inscription round the bronze effigy which, in recumbent position, lay on the pavement under the dome of Old Temple Church.

A Knight Templar “devoutly stretched,” clad in complete mail, with surcoat, his head resting on a cushion, his long, flowing hair thrown back from his brow, his arms crossed on his breast, and at his side his sword.

Is it that the roar of the Strand on the one side and cries and calls of old Father Thames on the other, the rush and strenuousness of our times, filtering into the silence of the old church, gives an added value to the dignity of the figure at our feet?

Did their times lend more to greatness than ours? Had their lives more of dignity than ours? Surely. Else how had come the calm, triumphant dignity of this crusader?

How the old names of the middle ages flood the memory! Urban II., Hugh de Pagains, Peter the Hermit, Godfrey de Bouillon and his Brothers. All the trappings, the splendour, the pomp of the Holy Wars become real, as one looks at the Knight Templar, as they never had done when read of under our Southern stars.

Right or wrong—good or bad—they are all sleeping,

and so, as I leave the old Temple, I pause at the Knight Templar's side.

"The war is over," I say, "sleep well."

Through the pale sunshine of the autumn day I wend my way from the Temple church to the river's side. On the floating platform a crowd has gathered.

Just a casual London crowd and passers by, passengers awaiting their river boats, newsboys who cry their wares as they run down the stone steps to the platform. In the centre of the crowd, on the slow moving platform, lies a man—silent in death.

His bare head rests on a folded bag. Long, scanty grey hair falls back from his lined old brow, his arms are crossed, and about his broad yet gaunt old form a bag has been closely folded. His feet are bare. Poor, gnarled old feet! pitiful to look at.

He lies before me, even as but five minutes before, in the Old Temple, had lain another knight.

Every line the same. The uncovered head, with its long, loose hair, resting on a cushion, the crossed arms—even the old bag takes on the semblance of a coat of mail.

In life, what had he been? Sordid squalor, hideous poverty had been his portion. It had pinched his face, had starved the large frame, had twisted his hands and misshapen his feet, and yet—calm, triumphant dignity wrapped him as in a garment—Death had ennobled him—"one of London's poorest poor"—even as it had the Knight Templar.

The platform swayed with the slow rhythm of the water's pulse, the crowd ebbed away.

"A suicide," said someone at my side. Perchance he marvelled at the strange smile which crept over my face; then I bent down to the still sleeper who had reached his "Holy Land" at last.

"The war is over," I said, softly, "sleep well."

His inscription thus:—

"Name unknown—workman. 1904."

A Water Frontage.

I.—GREY OF DAWN.

Stillness of leaf and of living thing; slow, faint pulse of water asleep—asleep before the dawn; headlands and distant islands dim through the mists—the floating, quivering white mist; yonder pale white lights gleam through the grey—the lights of a city asleep. The world is spellbound, somnolent, dream-like—a white page slowly, silently unrolling that Day may write thereon. What shall she write?

A ship in the offing, white too; motionless, phantom-like, lifting pale, tapering arms to the white dawn; silence, mystery over all in the circle of the hills—a waiting for the dawn. She comes. As pearls fall from a string, so comes the creamy wavelet round the sandy curve. With a long, tremulous sigh the waters are awakening. Gold shafts strike Ocean's face; gentle, peremptory, she rouses herself and smiles back at the Sun.

Leaves rustle, branches curtsy to Morn on the hilltops. A bird calls—ceases—calls again; a long, thrilling call. Joy is awake, and Sound. A whirr of wings and a wave of life surges over all; the first sunbeam has darted down into the shadows of the trees; their choirs awake, as waken the throats of the cathedral choirs at the wand of the conductor. The trees quiver, the sky flushes in the East, an iridescent shell. Now the gulls—Ocean's own—wheel and call; the waters beat with quick pulsations on the sandy corners of the blue iris bay and lave its “human shores” with caresses.

The ship midway on the laughing waters turns a bright, expectant bow to the incoming tide—a bell sounds across the bays; she also is calling a welcome to the day. Triumphant

day, with golden finger, traces his first mark on the fair white page; traces it in the wake of the moving ship. The way of the waters is astir.

II.—PURPLE OF NIGHT.

Purple shadows on the hills; a deeper purple where the waters croon at their base. Violet-tinted waters, that anon flash long, streaming gleams of gold from the nearer lights, ghosts of light from the more distant glitter of the city yonder. Everywhere throb-bing, pulsing, purple shadows. Night, the velvet-eyed goddess, has passed over the waters, and flung with careless prodigality her robes on either hand; their hem all 'broidered with diamonds. Laughing she passes—that wild, sweet, low, witching laugh of hers; she has flung her diamond net to the heavens, and it hangs trembling there. How warm and caressing is the darkness! How silent just now. No sound save that, far and faint, of the ferry boat, in the darkness turned to a fairy barge jewelled with ornaments of red and eyes of blue, trailing through the purple waters. How her lights quiver and waver and glow, ribboning out like streamers of golden wistaria that hang from a charmed trellis in fairyland. The boat rounds the curve of the bay; magic is in her movement; the water croons along her hull; is she real? Night on water and on hill, witchery of purple shadow and of diamond gleam. High up in the heavens wild swans are passing on their way to the lakes; their sweet, wild call floats down. Is it a bird-call, or that witch of the sombre eyes and dusky scented hair—subtle, mysterious night—a-calling?

Her Hands.

She was a quiet little body. Her face hidden in a hideous sun bonnet, but her hands always busy with her knitting. And of all the passengers I spoke to her the least, for she was not of a chatty nature, and among ship folk silent people are apt to be left lonely. But I think it was the ugly sun bonnet that kept me from trying to know the little old face that it held, and yet, too, the hands played a big part. They were not large, but coarse and so grained, with discolouration that not all the waters about us could have washed away, and the large joints and thin fingers repulsed me, for the hands were always to be seen, never resting; the sunlight striking the long, shining needles seemed the only living spot about her. One day it was too hot even for the ugly bonnet, and I saw a kindly old face looking with bright interest on our world. Then I drew a chair to her side, and I was sorry I had not done it earlier; for she grew interesting each hour, and at last she gave me one of the greatest lessons of my life, this quiet, little old lady with the ugly sun bonnet and uglier hands.

The day was very hot. Most people on deck were drowsing the afternoon away, and then I, too, lay back in my chair and watched the little lady's face; she was watching the sparkling water with unseeing eyes, and for once her hands were lying inert in her lap.

"What are you thinking of?" I said, slowly.

She turned a kindly, smiling face towards me.

"Of years and years ago," she said, simply.

"Will you tell me of them?" I replied. No idle curiosity lay in my request, but friendly interest in the long ago of the old lady.

"It is nothing great," she said, "just the common events of an ordinary life. I was thinking of the time,

thirty years ago, when I was on my way out from England to rejoin my husband. I had the six little ones with me, and in a letter he had said it was very lonely. Would I be brave enough to come out and wait till things grew better?"

With her quick, bird-like lift of the head she turned to me.

"I was too glad of the chance. I didn't write. I just sold off the home and paid our passages and started by the next boat. He was lonely, and I—why I was just hungry to see his face. But there were a lot of us, and when all was paid for, it was very little I had with me in goods or money; but he was at the other end, and all would be well. All that journey I pictured his joy at seeing us instead of a letter; and then we arrived."

Across the years memory had power to bring a look into her eyes which was half dread and half defiance.

"Six weeks before he had met with an accident, and the next week he was to be discharged from the hospital, a helpless cripple for life."

In the silence the boat sprung on through the laughing waters; a sleeping peace held the others near by, but I knew that the little old lady was away back in the horror of that penniless landing.

Then she lifted her head and smiled at me bravely.

"There was only one bright spot in that dark welcome—I was there to take care of him. He was to be my comfort, and I was to work for them all.

"It was a long fight—those hungry little mouths to feed and round little bodies to clothe. Even now I remember the weariness of body and the mind that dare not think of the future, the dread of breaking down when their need was greatest. The look in his eyes when he could do nothing, and yet he knew if he were not there to comfort me I should have given in. Work, work—yes, we did work, but we kept the wolf at bay, and the children grew older." She lifted her hands up and looked at them. "But you see we got knocked about a bit, didn't we?" she added, simply. I could not speak for shame.

"And now, after thirty years, we've had our first holiday. The children are all doing well," and her voice sank softly, "he only left me two years ago."

Then I bent my young head to the tired old hands and kissed each one tenderly, feeling I was not worthy to touch them. The little old lady never knew why I often took her hands into mine as though I had found some rarely beautiful things.

Her life story was written on her hands.

My Ti-Tree.

Have you ever felt the charm and magnetism of the ti-tree? If not, you cannot understand its fascination, and the never-abating love it evokes. Just to see the finely-pencilled twigs of a tree outlined against the sky is to feel an exquisite thrill at its beauty; and to see the whole tree, its twisted, intertwined branches, that lift their tiny twigs covered with the softest, tenderest leaves ever tree bore, the elastic movement, not only of the topmost branches, but of the swaying trunk itself, is weird, is wonderful. They seem like sportive spirits turned to trees, so unlike are they to all other trees in Mother Nature's family. Once a year, when spring kisses them, they put on a robe of fairest white, such a reckless profusion of fairy, starry flowers; tiny as the leaves themselves, and fragrant-breathed. And amongst all that is beautiful, and more than it all, is my own ti-tree, scaley-trunked, twisted of limb, beautiful of leaf. How I love it.

As I lean my head against my tree I feel as I once felt in Rome when I leant against the horn carvings of the Arc of Constantine. Then the yellow Roman sunlight dazzled my eyes, and a great silence as of death lay on my ears, and for the moment at least I, too, was of the past; a part of the old stone that had watched the triumphant processions of former ages pass underneath. I was in the dust and ashes of the past, old, but indestructible. I suddenly knew my age, not as an individual—that I was no longer—but of mankind in his race. I was as old as the first man, be he Adam or another. The "Thou" in me was all; the "I" had ceased to be.

So I feel now as I lean bareheaded against my ti-tree. I slip into the tree as a shadow melts into light. I am incorporate with it; we are one with the curious oneness of

Nature. Long I lean there, and cannot move away. When I would, (because I must), its breath draws me, its arms lean toward me, it speaks soft and low, "Stay, little one, stay." So there I linger against that shaggy trunk, my cheek close to the rough bark, so much one with it all that I feel that if there came a passer-by he would see a tree only.

Arabian Sketches.

LIFE AND DEATH.

Abul the Wise watched the children playing in the sand; the little round bodies racing about in the sunshine. His eyes wandered over the violet of the shadow of the hills, yonder against the fast sinking sun. The children played, heaping up mounds of sand, some high, some low, and laughed as they ran amongst them.

Then came an Arab woman from the tents and sat by the old man; in her arms she held a sleeping babe. She looked from the children to the wise old man. "Why do you smile, O Abul the Wise?" said she, softly. And he answered:

"We are but heaps of sand on the desert, some blown high, some low, by Circumstance, but the low heaps murmur at the high, and ever the tall heaps look with pride and scorn on the low. But Life laughs at them, even as the children laugh, and there comes One among them whose long, trailing robe levels all the heaps."

The woman was silent, not understanding. A tall Arab, in long, flowing robe, that fluttered in the wind, came across the children's heaps of sand, levelling them to the plain, and stood before the woman and the Wise Man. With grave courtesy he greeted them, and took the sleeping babe into his arms. "Even so," said the Wise Man, "shall Death, when he has levelled all the heaps, take us all one day."

The Arab's eyes looked a question, but the woman smiled, this time with understanding.

PRIDE OR THE PALM TREE.

The tall palm tossed its wide arms in the breeze, and laughed in the hot sunshine. Abul the Wise sat in the

shade, and in the silence he heard a low, low sobbing. It seemed to come from the earth at his feet. He stooped and listened. The tall palm rustled its leaves. It laughed mockingly.

"Why do you laugh?" asked the Wise Man of the palm tree.

"Because Mother Earth calls me back to her; but why should I go back, I who toss my head in the hot sunshine?"

"And yet you will go back," said Abul the Wise quietly.

"Never," said the palm, with pitying scorn; "what have I to do with the earth? I but leave my roots there to please her."

"And yet I say you will go back." Abul the Wise smiled as he spoke, and, taking a sharp blade from his girdle, he climbed the tree and cut one long, waving branch from the stem. It fell fluttering to the ground, and the tree quivered with terror and amaze, for the Wise Old Man struck fire into the palm leaf, and it caught in its wind-dried parts till soon the fierce flame devoured it, and a little heap of ash lay on the sand. The wind came softly, and the fine powder mixed into the burning sand, and soon the proudly-waving palm-leaf was but a memory of what had been.

The sobbing of Mother Earth ceased, and she called softly, as she clung to the roots deep down in her, "You will come back to me sooner or later. I can wait." Abul the Wise laid his hands softly on the tall, smooth column of the palm tree.

"Be not proud, oh beautiful palm tree, of your grace and beauty, scorning the earth below. Be it thou, or be it I, we go back at last from whence we came. All things move in a circle. Aye, I, too, love the sunshine, but grieve not that there comes the day when I shall blow pale ash back to Mother Earth."

Then Abul the Wise sat silent in the shade. The palm, lost in thought, lifted motionless leaves in the hot sunshine, and from the earth came a warm sweetness.

SAYINGS OF ABUL THE WISE.

A low, moaning sound comes through the sheen of moonlight that lies on the sandhills, and covers them with enchantment. The leaves of the palm move a feathery, purple plume in the clear light. A young Arab, with slow, sinuous grace, moves noiselessly over the shimmering sand, and pauses at the tent that is pitched below the palm.

“Abul! Abul the Wise!” cries the young Arab, low and softly, peering into the shadows within.

“I am here, my son,” and the young Arab sees that the Wise Old Man sits even at the tent door. Young and old, the Wise Man and the young learner, sit silent awhile, and the low moan of the water, coming with slow disdain on the shore yonder, mingles with the rustle of the palm leaves and the rare tinkle of a camel bell.

“What is Love?” asked the young man, suddenly moving his folded arms in his long white robe, as he turned his dark eyes on the old man in the shadow. Abul the Wise bent his narrow eyes on the young man’s face, for on him fell the silver light in a moving flicker when the palm tree waved.

Abul smiled. “All ask that,” he said, “and never is one satisfied with my answer; for but few know that I speak the truth.”

“Tell me,” said the young Arab.

“It is as a shell picked up, perchance, on yonder shore; perfect in form and colour, but lacking one half. You know the pale-tinted, fan-shaped shells, light, frail, beautiful, perfect only when two fans fold to one shell?”

The young Arab drew nearer. “I have often found one fan; rare, the perfect two,” he said, eagerly.

“Ay, there you have Love. He that finds the second half finds a perfect shell; he that takes other than that, forever shall they be as two separate shells that the storms of Life and winds of Circumstance fling blindly and cruelly on the shore, only to be sucked back again—forever two shells.”

As Abul ceased speaking, a murmuring silence crept

over the sand. The young Arab shivered, and drew his flowing robe closer. "And he who finds a perfect shell?" he asked softly.

"Finds that which is supremely beautiful," Abul answered, "that which the fiercest storm cannot harm; for on the waves it will ride serene in the tumult—buoyant, lovely thing, it will come in on the shore, and, lying safe with the wet seaweed, be a joy to all beholders." The low, monotonous voice ceased its chanting, and the old man turned to the young Arab.

"Is not Love so?" he said.

And the young man smiled. "I know one pearl among women," he smiled back softly, happily; "she is sweet even as the attar of roses; she is lovely even as the shells on yonder marge; I have found the perfect shell, and—"

The old man smiled. "Even thus," he answered, "so said all the rest."

The long, low whinny of a horse was heard, and the Arab rose and stood, a noble figure in his flowing robes. His dark eyes flashed, and, with sudden eagerness, he bade farewell to the Wise Man, and went swiftly, silently across the sand.

With long, swinging stride, an Arab horse bears his master steadily towards the north, till the sound of the sea grew fainter, and on ahead, past the horizon, clustered a company of tents. In one, a maiden—even as every other maiden—let the glow of her heart steal into her dark eyes. Did she not know that far over the desert came an Arab horse, swinging with quick rhythmic gallop—nearer—nearer.

The perfect shell; how many find? The Wise Old Man under his tent down by the sea, smiles—and sighs.

Fate's Answer.

“ And Life stood by a sleeping babe,
Smiling with tender love upon the newly born.
‘ May love be thine, oh little child,’ she said,
And, stooping, kissed the tiny form.

“ And then, across the new earth-child, she saw
The dark mysterious gleaming eyes of Fate.

“ Then Life bent forward eagerly, and o'er the babe
Her hands outstretched.

‘ Oh, give the child a Fate so fair, that wondering
Mortals whisper soft,
Fate is not cruel—but is kind,’ she said.

“ A laugh, low, bitter, was the answer made,
As Fate with wanton quickness turned unto the sleeping
babe
And smiled. Ah, me, e'en now that smile in eyes we see.
‘ Why should I? Some must suffer; why not she?’ ”

“How I Love Trees.”

How I love trees! They attract me with a compelling magnetism; they seem to be atune to all that is best in me, all that is best in my most deep inner self. With their soothing power they whisper softly, as a mother to her child; and as a little child amongst them I forget the world with its joys and sorrows.

“Rest your head against us,” they say, “and let us pour our spirit into your veins, and we will re-vitalise your world-weary heart. And so I feel my heart-beats quicken, and into my dust-laden soul come the pure, sweet waters of peace and beauty. I am carried on a flood of rapture away from all the storm and stress. How precious a legacy, this capacity to feel! How the soul life in us—their lovers—rushes to meet these dear tree friends, ever true, ever the same, not asking that you be great or good, nor making upon you any of man’s demands; asking nothing save the joy of pouring their wild, free life into your veins, and making you—if only for a time—part of themselves.

Have you ever seen one of the great forest kings, bound in chains, going through the city, silent and still in the sorrow of death? When I see one of these grand monarchs thus ignobly chained, I bow before him in spirit, awed at sight of the sovereign torn from his mountain throne, and carried captive to an alien land. Away from his hosts of the long-reaching arms of green—his serried ranks of soldiers that did him homage and service—his own great branches to fling themselves no more against the pale horizon, catching the first sweet light of the dawning, and sending the whisper of its coming, down, down, into the matted green life at his base. The noble form that took the mountain storms, or made sweet music as the sea breeze swept over it. Ah! to see such in fetters bound for another

land. There is still a dignity about him that nothing can take away; great heroic soul going calmly to his doom.

Unnoted amid the bustling throng, I have stepped anon from the pavement just to lay my hand in good fellowship upon the passing forest king. It may be in mute farewell; or I may bend down and whisper, "Farewell, oh king; I, too, am bleeding at the heart because of bondage. Farewell, my friend!"

The weather-beaten waggon, the complaining wheels, the toiling horses, the driver, careful only that his "load" is right, and the chains that clang and swing. Ah! what thoughts the picture gives; what sad thoughts and dreams of liberty, lost liberty. . . . But the king has passed by, and the rabble has closed in behind.

The King's Vision.

The stormy clangour
Of wild music o'er the earth shall cease;
Love shall tread out the baneful fire of anger,
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace.

—J. G. Whittier.

The King sat at the Council table. Round him stood the throngs of Councillors. Some old, some young. Over the heads of some, many, many winters had passed, leaving them grey and weary. But among the throng there were other men, who, like the King, were young in years and life-knowledge. These talked loudly and passionately.

The King looked at the sea of faces, and then at the parchment lying on the table awaiting his sign and seal. From the vaulted roof of the great hall hung numberless flags; on the walls trophies and spoils of successful war—glorious war.

To extend his sway, add kingdoms to kingdoms, to be the greatest king on all the earth; ah! that was to live, to conquer. Why listen to the grey-haired men who sue in the name of peace?

They are old, and have forgotten the wild grandeur of the battle song, the throb of excitement as, fort after fort, the enemy were borne back and the kingdom gained a new king. The triumph, the glory of war!

The King's eyes flashed. He turned from eager passion, patient peace, and lifted the pen; he would set his hand and seal. There should be another war. The king looked down at the document on the table; there was a sudden great silence in the place; the pen was lifted; then, through the great round window came a single sunbeam,

one long, bright shaft of light. Striking down through the gloom upon the parchment, there it stayed, a round, bright, glowing spot in the place of the King's great seal. The King saw it. Hundreds of times he had seen such bright spots, and they had never given him a thought.

Now, with the Council awaiting his decree, while the lives of hundreds, the homes of a nation, hung in the balance, the King paused, and forgot all save to watch the sunbeam.

From the bright sun seal, the King's eyes travelled along the golden shaft; past young, eager faces; past the old, weary ones, up, up into the gloom of the high, vaulted roof.

What was it that the King saw? Just motes in a sunbeam—tiny worlds floating on, ever on. Millions of them; yet there was no disorder. Easily, steadily they moved. Each had a place and kept it. How beautiful it all was, how bright and wondrous were those tiny worlds. Like shining suns they "ran their measured course." The King was fascinated. Sunbeam motes, and he had only just discovered their beauty.

The Councillors spoke among themselves; surely the King had forgot the question at issue—to be, or not to be—war.

But though they spoke to him he heard them not. What had come over the King? He who had been so eager for a great, glorious war was watching with rapt attention a sunbeam.

Slowly, one by one, the Councillors left the great hall. At last the King was alone, but he knew it not. So the time passed.

"How wonderful, how beautiful are they," the King said, softly.

"Tell me, O King, who are beautiful?"

At the sound of the strange, quiet voice, the King turned and saw a stranger by his side. The King smiled. "The motes in the sunbeam," he answered, simply.

But the stranger said, "Look again; it is not a sunbeam that you see."

And the King saw that the Council hall with its lofty roof had vanished; the sunbeam, too, had gone; instead he saw the great universe.

He saw sun, moon and stars; he saw them move in their appointed places; he heard the music of their motion as they moved through space. One mighty paean the universe sang. Worlds of beauty, worlds of light; small and great moved they ever; no disorder, no crowding, but the way clear before all.

Circle within circle, wheel within wheel, the great universe of worlds moved on.

The King was speechless with wonder and awe. The stranger at his side, smiling, said softly, "The sunbeam; the universe are but parts of one great whole."

In the wheeling of the worlds the King saw the vastness, the immensity of space. He was troubled.

"Alas!" he cried, "what am I; where is my kingdom?" Then the stranger took his hand. "Come," he said, "I will show thee thy kingdom, and what thou art."

They journeyed past great worlds until they came to one smaller. "Here will we find thy kingdom."

"But," answered the King, "the earth upon which my kingdom lies is great; this world is small."

"Even so, it is the Earth."

And the King knew that he spoke truly. His companion showed him a small speck on the earth. "That spot is thy kingdom, great King."

"My kingdom is great," replied the King, quickly. "I have conquered nations; my dominion is greatest of all kings on earth."

"Yet thy kingdom is but a speck."

Then, as they drew closer, the King saw his dominion, his great Council hall, his Councillors—and himself.

"You would grasp a little more of that little earth,"

said the stranger.

The King felt rebuked; turning, he followed his companion. How beautiful the earth was, how full of goodness; and yet people seemed to have no time to look at it.

The King saw an army of strong men fall upon a weaker people; there was clashing of arms and killing of men—all for a little more domain and wealth.

“I would not have done so,” said the King. “That was cowardly to attack the weak.”

He stopped abruptly. Looking closely, he saw that the place was the last domain he had conquered. Then he had seen only the glory; elated with his triumph, laden with the spoils of warfare.

Now he saw the other side. The music of his triumph could not drown the cries of the wounded, the widows, the fatherless; the wailing rose up to him until his heart was rent; for the music of his triumph could not drown their cries.

He saw the misery, the desolation, the greed, the wrong—and through it all, himself riding with his eyes flashing in the joy of triumph, with a heart swollen with pride at his prowess.

“Fool, fool,” cried the King, “can that cruel tyrant be myself? I, who thought my soul great and wondrous—that creature of a day who is puffed up because he is King over yonder speck! Am I such?”

“It is thy kingdom and thyself,” said his companion. “Tell me how great thou art.”

“How great?” answered the King, humbly. “I tell thee I know how small I and all kings are.”

“And yet all thy life thou wouldest spend in war; in thy short span how much couldst thou hope to win of this great universe?”

And again the King saw the huge universe.

“Would not the sound of the ploughshares ring back sweeter music than is beaten out by the crossing of your swords? Would not the singing of the people be sweeter than the wailing of the wounded and the sorrowing?”

“Tell me,” cried the King, suddenly, “who art thou? What is thy name?”

And the sound of sweetest music ascending from many worlds answered in the one word, “Peace.”

"Peace," repeated the King, wonderingly. "Why have I not heard of thee before?"

"They were my messengers," replied Peace, with a smile of beauty, as he pointed toward the grey-haired Councillors whom the King had not heeded.

"Thou hast heard the music of the other worlds; now listen to the music of the Earth."

The King listened. "There is a strangely sweet music," he said. "Ah! I have lost it in the cries and wailings; and yet," sadly, "the strain was very sweet."

"When warfare and violence, with cruel oppression, have ceased on the earth, then, only then, will earth's music ring out sweet and true." Peace smiled sadly. "Ah! it is long coming. Look over the earth and tell me what thou seest."

The King answered, "I see men stand face to face. They are armed to the teeth—nation against nation. How small they look from here. Each watches the other; eye to eye they stand, ready to fly, at a word, at each other's throats."

"The quarrel of the nations is very noble, dost thou not think, O King? How looks it to thee?"

"Pitifully mean," the King made answer, with shame and trouble. "I, for one, will war no more."

"Remember," came solemnly a voice in the air, borne as from a great distance. The King started; he was alone in the great Council hall. Down through the gloom fell a brighter shaft of sunlight, striking the parchment that still lay before him, with a round, glowing seal.

The King smiled tenderly as he held his hand up toward the many bright worlds in the sunbeam. And he remembered, for he lifted his pen and wrote—

"Henceforth peace and goodwill to all men."

The Sea Along the Cliff.

Oh, wondrous, laughing sea, with the gulls floating silently amongst the ripples. Oh, wild, strong sea, when the wind is a hurricane. I love the storm in my place of shelter equally with the dear, dreamy days of summer time.

Good it is to see the quiet and to feel it, when the waters are calm. Good to feel the salt wind blowing hard, to see the scudding cloud above, to listen to the beat of wave. It is life. Fill me, oh sea, with your own spirit while I run along the firm, salty sand, with the water on one hand, and beyond the cliffs, on the other, the blue, waving outline of hills, and beyond and through them each, the gateway of a wide world.

Lovely crescent of silver sands all mine, washed by the roll of the southern seas, as they come in, ocean-weary, to fall to the feet of the cliff; or, in frolic mood, to pretend to whisper the secret of the ocean to the listening sands—laughing to slip back into the mother's arms. That long curve is beautiful, eye-resting—one forgets that streets are straight.

How human sometimes is the murmur of the sea, be it speaking in soft croons, or shouting, stern and terrible! How much it suggests of life, of happiness, of struggle, of ineffable longing. How like fate it is, how childishly irresponsible; flinging its jewels wantonly on the sands, weary of their beauty—discarded and forgotten.

She gives pleasure, she gives pain, but her dominant gift is peace.

A Fantasy

The woman was happy, for sheer joy of life, as she roamed over the hill.

Her arms full of yellow flowers, honey sweet, and fern fronds. Now and again she let them fall in a heap on the grass, and then knelt leaning over the glorious profusion with wide eyes of delight.

She buried her face in the Spring sweetness.

"I love you—I love you so," she cried softly to them—then she threw up her head.

"And *he* would say I was making believe—'stage effect'—Ah!—*he* is gray ash,—*you*"—she glanced over her shoulder with grave sweetness—"you know, you understand."

Then she gathered up the flowers again, her arms brimming over with their fragrant load, and as she moved through the long grass, began to sing,—to sing, even as a bird sings, because the sun shines and the breath of Spring lies all along the land.

Suddenly her song died on her lips.

She paused irresolutely, then slipped silently into a low, quivering bush, all aflame with young red gum leaves.

Just before her the hill was bound with a long white ribbon of a road.

And a man stood there, shading his eyes with his hand.

He was looking intently to the right; he did not see the glimmer of the white dress so near on his left.

The woman looked at him—a long dispassionate examination—then she spoke softly as though to someone at her side.

"You are alike," she said; "wide white brow, deep

brown eyes,—and the mouth—are those lines about it, weakness or tenderness?—and that chin—firm almost to cruelty. Yes. You are alike—but *you*,” she stretched out her arm and seemed to fold her hand over another, “you are the living coal of sympathy—*he* is gray ash.”

Then even as she spoke, watching between the swaying leaves, she saw a sudden flame leap to the man’s eyes, and over the dead cold face swept a wave of living passionate tenderness.

The woman by the low bush started.

“Ah, now he is living coal—you are alike, you, by my imagination—even as he by—another woman.”

For her eyes had followed those of the man on the road, and she saw a woman coming slowly towards them. Her grey dress fell in long straight lines, and seemed to be fitting frame for the cold, unsympathetic face.

Nearer came the other woman; from the low bush, unconscious of her very act, the first woman leaned forward and watched.

Each instant seemed to add a new tenderness to the man’s face—the stern lines that the struggle of the market place had drawn, were smoothed away—his very hands seemed to cry aloud his love.

The woman in the grey dress came abreast; she glanced casually at him, bowed with cold, grave courtesy, which hardly seemed to reach her consciousness—and passed on.

When the grey dress could no longer be seen through the trees, the man turned quickly and walked away in the opposite direction.

The woman’s eyes grew gentle as she let the branches fall together. “Gray ash I said in my ignorance,” she said softly to someone at her side.

Then she lifted her face soft with infinite tenderness. It was as though someone stood before her, for as she raised her face, her hands moved up also, palms outwards, as though they rested on someone’s breast.

“I am a great artist,” she said, her voice so low, so

sweet hardly the flowers could hear it,—“for I created *you* out of my own heart—and I created you truly; you are his very self—but your tenderness, your love, your life are for *me*—his, all for another woman—and she does not want it.”

It was a gentle smile that came into her dark eyes as she turned back and glanced down the wide road.

“For your sake I wish her eyes were open to your love—but she is blind—even as you.”

The sweet breath of Spring came a-singing over the hill, the woman turned quickly from the road.

“The Ideal is dearer than the Real,” she chanted; “Blue hills are always blue in the land o’ dreams—never the gray ash, nor age—nor other woman.”

Then the curious chanting ceased; she knelt in the long grass and gathered the flowers into a mass.

“Come,” she cried, gaily, “Take my hand and run with me in the sunshine. Let us be children—what have we to do with the things of grown folks?—That means sorrow, for a film hides the greatest things from our sight, and we pass all unknowing—we are blind—blind—blind!”

With one arm full of flowers, and the other outstretched, as though clasped by some unseen hand, the woman ran with flying feet from the place where the white ribbon of a road winds over the hill.

The Choir Along the Shore.

One day in seven I am released, and fly me to the sea-shore. And there for me is all I need. The quiet place—if I am for silence and sweet peace—or the groves where the choir sings and twitters. Be it hot, the choir is in the shady aisles of ti-tree; or if the weather be bleak, and I am for bird life to watch and to listen, then to the more scant foliage that serves them to perch upon, yet admits the sunlight, I go.

And here to my Holy Land come the birds—the minah, with her quaint call; the blackbird, with his full, glorious note. Here the swallow darts and wheels in shadow and in shine, uttering the while its calls as it gathers its fledglings on some bare tree overhanging the cliff, alternately teaching them to fly and feeding them.

One glorious day I saw not less than fifty young swallows—a sight so beautiful I never can forget it. The parents circled round them, calling, enticing, tempting them to spread their wings. Oh, the brave attempts. The quick, startled chirps as they made the desperate venture. How I loved them as I lay in the shadow of a tree, motionless, for a whole hour that I might watch their pretty ways. I was richer that day for that sight than for the whole week's toil.

There, too, in the deep shadows beneath the matted green boughs I saw a quail, his slow, deliberating, bright eyes fixed on my motionless figure, not knowing if to fear—my little feathered brother! Above, from twig to twig, like brown leaves fluttering in the breeze, are the tiny brown finches, wild canaries, and the clear-chirping wagtail. Even the great jackass will fly with his merriment through the quiet places, and sometimes—though seldom—I have heard the magpie carolling forth his notes of pure joy, and have felt my heart almost bursting within me with unutterable

longing for—what? Is it perfect happiness (which we feel in the bird's music), that we long for, or is it envy of our dearly-loved black and white songster? Exultant notes gush from a wandering blackbird; the tremulous melody of a thrush falls on the ear; they seem to sing in duet, perched close together, one on a ti-tree branch, the other on the top-most bough of a golden-blossomed wattle.

Through the sparkling blue, arrows shoot unceasingly. It is the swallows and others of their tribe, swift of wing, gleaming of feather, sweetest of sweet twitterers. Energy made visible. And beneath the wheelers the restless wrens hop ever from branch to branch of the low scrub. The harsh note, mellowed by distance, of the old jay—that Cinderella of the house of kingfishers—as I pass along the green aisles comes not amiss on my ear. Later, as I come beneath his tree, he cocks his head sideways in sage meditation, and the round, simple eyes seem filled with wonder and something like pity. Perhaps it is pity for that curious, slow-moving thing that, with creeping feet, glued ever to the earth, goes by. Then, with a burst of laughter at the sight—a triumphant shout—with a glorious sweep he is gone, and silence for a space comes back.

I see the sheen on the jewelled neck of the wood pigeons as they pass with a whirr of wings overhead. I watch the tiny, brown-feathered songster that flits elfin-like from bracken fern to ti-tree branch, rising with sudden bound, to fall with sidelong sweep to hide from my eyes in the undergrowth.

And the last note of my choir is the cry of the seagull that wheels beyond the cliff top, never far from his beloved sea. His cry fits for contrast of the peace within my quiet aisles, and the loud voices and eternal restlessness of the great sea so near. Visible and invisible singers in that choir, how dear are you all to me! And the sea, what shall I say of the sea? Nothing. She has a thousand tongues, speaks all languages, and knows the way to all hearts with her murmurs of mystery.

Love.

An Allegory.

In a poor little room they lay, little sleeping children, the sound of their first cry but a few days old, and the mother was filled with love and glad reverence for the little strangers.

“Oh, Father! bless my little ones,” she cried.

Into the poor little room came two bright angels; they lingered by the baby faces and kissed the sleeping eyelids.

“We will come again, little ones, to bear God’s greatest gift to thee,” said the angels.

And the mother heard the echo of their words in her heart, and saw the smile on the little one’s faces, and she said, “the angels are guarding my own.”

So it was that the little ones came; so it was that they grew. One of them had eyes lit with the blue of heaven; the other, deep, dark brown, like the warm, soft light of a fawn.

The little ones grew until their feet stood on the pathway called life, the way before them.

Hand in hand they wandered on, coming to an open door, then entered. In the vaulted nave the clouds of incense still hung, and through the shadowy arches the low, sweet music crept. With slow, noiseless steps the children move, on to where the flowers are smiling in the rich, soft light, on towards the place where the Beloved One stands, where the sunbeam floods the altar with glory.

“Sister, ‘tis a holy place!” said the blue-eyed child. Then, hand in hand, they knelt and prayed, though they hardly knew. Then, as they knelt, from the sunbeam came two angels, so beautiful their shining faces, and in their hands two rare flowers.

The children were silent with wonder, yet, when the angels smiled, the little ones answered with glistening eyes, and moved towards them. A sweet, soft voice was heard.

"My little ones," it said, "we give unto you that which is God's greatest gift; let it accompany you through life, and, as you journey, you will learn its name."

And to each child the angels gave a lovely flower. No flower of earth so beautiful; no scent so full and rich; like healing balm. "My little children, let none ask of thee for the beauty of your flower and be denied; give unto all that need. The flowers may be watered with thy tears, but as thou givest of thy flower so shalt thy flower grow and live. Now thou canst not comprehend all these things, but when the Way of Life seems hard and weary, thou shalt know their meaning. Little ones, never cast thy flowers away; there is none greater."

Then, even as they gazed, the sunbeam seemed to cover the angels with such dazzling light that the wide-open childish eyes were blinded. When they saw again they said—"The angels have gone up the sunbeam to God!"

And the children grew. Now maidens, looking out on the world with sweet, pure eyes. Still fast they hold their holy flowers; still hand in hand they walk the way of life.

Lying by the wayside is a little child; it looks with eager, famishing eyes at their beautiful flowers. "Give me; oh! give me," it cries, holding out its weak arms. The maidens pause. Give their flowers away? What had the angels said—"Let none need and be denied." The blue eyes look into the brown eyes of her sister. "If we give our flowers we will have none for ourselves. No, no! I cannot spare mine. I have only one."

But the stranger child only cried—"Give me; oh! give me." Then the brown-eyed maid was filled with sorrow. Tears fell from her eyes and her voice trembled.

"Sister, the angel also said, 'As thus givest, so shalt thy flower live.' Poor little stranger! I will give thee my flower and I will remember its perfume," and she picked

the flower from its stem. Then, bending down, kissed the child and placed her flower in the thin, small hands.

Then they journeyed on; and strange! from the place where the flower had been another lovelier grew; and the heart of the child sang with joy.

The maidens grew. They were women. No longer could they walk hand in hand. The Way was changed; flowers gave place to thorns; the peaceful meadows became the busy crowd, and in the hurry and struggle the sisters were divided.

The woman with the blue eyes kept her flower to herself; she cared not that others should see its beauty or breathe its rich, sweet scent. None knew she had the treasure, for she said, "If I give my flower, I may not get another; besides, a stranger would not value it as I. No; I will keep it in its beauty with care." But her sister, as the crowd thronged about her, learned to mark with delight the joy in another's eyes when they breathed the strange, sweet perfume which surrounded her flower; for as often as she picked the flower another grew in its place, and each one lovelier than the last. She was not afraid now to give a flower, for she knew another would come. How different from the one who had had the same chance, but drew back, afraid that *she* might have none.

The Way would have been hard and weary, but if the brown eyes closed with weariness, one to whom she had given a flower would say, "Oh, loved one, rest your heart on mine; let my hand guide you in love, let my eyes see for you, let me give a little of that great love which thou hast given me!" They would crowd around her and silently bless her, and gently kiss her hand which held the flower.

Then she knew the flower's name was Love. The day was dying. Soon the Pathway of Life would end at the Great Door, the Portal of Eternity, and at last the sisters met again.

The blue eyes were hard and bright, the face worn and weary, and there was no joy or peace thereon. The flower

she still carried ; she had grown used to it, but its beauty had faded, it was shrunken and shrivelled, and the perfume had utterly died away. Into the hard blue eyes the warm soft brown eyes look ; she reads there all the weary sadness of that selfish life, the life that gave nothing.

“Hast thou found the flower’s name, oh, my sister?” she asks, softly.

“No ; hast thou? See! the flower is miserable ; it hardly lives ; yet I was filled with care for it. I did not give a single leaf from it, that I might not spoil it. I have kept it just as the angels gave it, but it is almost dead.”

With her soft voice trembling with love her sister answered—“The flower’s name is Love! sister mine. I learnt that I must give of it, that it might live. I have done so. See! my flower is as lovely as when the angel gave it to me. Take it, take mine in your hand ; only a few steps more and we will need it no longer. Let me hold your hand. I am old. Life did not teach you that Love out of a pure heart is the greatest of all, and to him that hath, more shall be given.”

She placed the flower in her sister’s hand, the bright, living flower next the dull, dying angel-gift ; but, with a quick sob, the blue eyes turned to the brown.

“No, no ; I must not take yours! Take your flower, dear sister ; take it!” she cried ; and as she pressed the bright flower back into her sister’s hand, lo, sudden life had thrilled through her own and it was beautiful even as the other. At last she had returned love to another, even though only one, and at the end of life.

Then they entered the Holy Place, once again hand in hand ; they moved, with feeble, weary steps, towards the place where the Beloved One stands ; they saw the flowers smiling in the golden glory of the bright sunbeam ; then they knelt again, very old and very feeble, and down the shadowy aisle soft, sweet music crept ; high in the vaulted nave the incense hung.

Then softly, so tenderly, the message came, and up the broad, bright sunbeam two angels carried the world-weary souls to God, the “Perfect Love.”

“On Each Side.”

On each side and behind me all was shadow. Deep and dark rose the cliffs of the Unknown Country. I knew that I was dead. In Life there is no silence lies so sweet on tired ears. I had reached the Hereafter, that I knew; but how? I looked about me. Strange the shadows, but stranger still that silence. At my feet tideless grey waters; mysterious, still, grey waters—and beyond?

That other shore? Lights flashed and gleamed, and lay like white arms outstretched on the still waters. I saw red lights of Love, green light of Hate, and the steady gleam of the white lamps of Hope. Forms passed and repassed. Surely that faint echo that came weirdly across the dim water was the hum of laughter and of music.

Even as I looked came one solemn, deep-throated clang of a bell, loud, imperative. It startled the shadows and pulsed slowly, slowly across the wide waters. 'Twas like the call of relentless Fate claiming the souls of men.

I saw something stir upon the shore called Life; it moved slowly, silently, and came nearer—a strange barge of curious build—and in it I saw the moving forms of men. Nearer and nearer it came, as though impelled by some unseen, inexorable force from the shore of shadows. No lap, lap about its bow, no crooning of waters along its keel; it seemed hardly to move, so slowly it came. No sound of keel on the sand, no sound of feet on the shore; but I saw it touch the shadowland and its passengers disembark to vanish from sight in the greater shadow of the cliffs.

Even as the last passenger leaves the barge it moves off again on its unceasing journey across the grey waters towards that faint, echoing music and the lights that gleam. For that Bargeman wearies not.

A Dream.

"The world is full of sin; there is no good in it," I cried in my bitterness. Then I turned my face from the light of the stars and slept. And, lo! I dreamed.

I stood on the summit of a great mountain; the chill night wind was moaning in the trees around me, and I was alone, alone. In the valley far below, lay the world of men and darkness; deep, impenetrable darkness enwrapped it as a garment. I laughed bitterly.

"It is meet that darkness should enfold it. There is no good in it." A voice fell on my ears, a sweet, soft voice. "Poor little mortal," it said. I turned, and at my side stood a beautiful being. Calm, pitiful eyes were looking into mine.

"Poor little mortal. Why cry in your blindness? 'There is no good.' Little one, I am here to show you the world with the eyes of the All Loving."

And the beautiful being at my side gently took my hand in his, and I saw with immortal eyes.

Lo! the world was no longer a dark mass; stars, tiny, sparkling stars, shone in myriads all through it, casting a radiance so beautiful that it was transformed. Was that the dark, sinful world I had known? That beautiful place? Then I said, wondering to myself, "Beautiful stars can have no place in the world of sin. Why are they there?"

The beautiful being, with a wonderful smile, answered me: "Little, wondering soul, the stars which you see shining amid the world's darkness are the self-sacrifices, the kindly deeds, the helping words, and the good returned for evil of man to man, of brother to brother; forgotten or unnoticed by the world, but in the light of God the shining stars which you see. Look at the stars and say if thou canst, 'There is no good in it.' "

The shining stars lit the great darkness beneath. I bowed myself before the sweet presence, and the gentle rebuke of my wild unreason sank into my heart. Then I lifted my eyes. I was alone on the great mountain, the wind was moaning in the trees, and a great darkness hid the world below from my sight; but my soul saw the stars. A deep sigh burst from my heart, and I awoke in peace.

A Ramble.

“How near to good is what is wild.”—Thoreau.

Not a score of miles from the city is a “holy land,” that Thoreau, White of Selborne, or Richard Jeffries would have sauntered through with exquisite delight, and through this holy land the road, like the river, winds.

Far on our left stands a belt of virgin scrub—a dark, eye-resting green cliff, towards which the green paddocks flow, undulating hills, and grassy hollows, and dotted about—careless and picturesque—are the tall gum trees;

“From whose scant foliage is made
A ragged penury of shade.”

In the paddocks, the children of the great trees dance into life. Here, there, everywhere, all sizes and shapes—long, slender, pointed leaves, tinted to palest green, while the lavender-frosted patines are crowned with pinkest buds. But everywhere colour and movement of delicate twigs and branch. Young stems blood-red, others again like absinthe, but each leaf a thing of beauty. The glory of the gum leaf! Dame Nature has writ it large all over our great land, and needs not mere mortal praise.

Nature has made of this place a lovely retreat, and man, perhaps influenced unconsciously, has not laid a devastating hand upon its loveliness—he has but added a human note to the scheme. Old orchards sweep to the very road, and, as we saunter along, we see dim vistas of pale, shimmering green under the gnarled old apple trees; a shadowy unreal light haunts the depths of these old orchards, that is neither kith nor kin to the golden sunlight that plays above, and in that unreality, strange fancies play hide and seek about the misshapen trunks and low, branching boughs.

About the cottages, built in the early days, the quinces

hang like pale lanterns awaiting the dusk, and, close by, arrogant young apple trees turn rosy-cheeked, sweet-smelling fruit to the passers-by.

The road winds all the way. On one side the deep bed of the creek—dry in summer, but, from the grasses and trees growing on its sides, a raging torrent in the winter—for they, poor things, in some cases are still lying as the waters swirled them. On the other side of the road the paddocks are not so clear. But from the carpet of fragrant grasses the great white boles of the gum trees rise up to the blue sky—like shining pillars in the aisle of a great cathedral—so here, with the blue above for a roof, and slender, delicately-poised young trees, like maidens, for the congregation, we come unaware upon a service. Then the wind plays on the trees, and as the music creeps up the aisles, the young trees flush and bend in a dream of joy, and lift their plumed heads that the wind, their lover, may kiss them—carelessly, I ween, alas!—as he passes.

The road winds on—fruit gardens unfold themselves on the hillside, and flow down into the uncultivated ground along a creek bank, and newly-turned mould lies like a forgotten robe upon the earth.

Our way is flecked with gleaming gold, a tracery of light on the moving shadows of the trees. Overhead brilliant, sparkling blue depths, in which white, wonderful clouds trail like a laughing band of children towards the north. A day to be glad in, an ideal day to saunter through holy lands.

There is a gleam, a quiver, a swaying in every blade of grass, in each twig and branch of the young trees on either side of the road, their leafy crowns shine through a silver halo, as the sunshine plays on their pointed leaves.

What a throbbing note of colour the briar berries bring—they are everywhere, tossing their brazen red up against the blue; one almost hears their laughter as they sway in the wind, and nod with impudence born of their riotous colour. The duller red of the hawthorn berry is shamed into hiding behind the leaves. On all the briar bushes only

one rose did I find. The last rose of summer, looking up with sweet, wild shyness in its wide eye. Dainty fairy, the last to follow the fair sisters flitted with the spring. How faint and sweet its perfume; it lingers almost as a memory of that spring time, when the air palpitated with the scent of thousands of elfin roses. Dear, wee rose-mother of queenly daughters of a later day, how you draw our love for your very simplicity and charm. Surely you sweet wild thing cannot be kin to these red, flaunting berries? It seems more meet to think of you as the fluttering, white-winged butterfly that settles an instant on the ground beside us, then is wafted across the grassy paddocks. Your petals and butterfly wings—but red berries?

It is good to lie in the grass just off the road, and listen to the wind in the trees (so like the ripple of the wavelets that break on a shelly beach), and, lying close to earth, our eyes see its little people. How the ants gleam in the sunlight—one with wings comes slowly towards us, then it stops, it seems to be struggling, we look closer, its almost phantom feet are working feverishly at its wings, one wing falls, then another, more struggling, and then, with utter unconcern, the little creature continues on its way; its shed wings move in the air and catch the light, a gleam, and they have passed. No more the intoxication of the winging creature now; for the "ever" of its existence it must creep. No more the swift, soft beat of wings. There, in obedience to an unwritten law, the little creature left the ethereal blue for the earth, for narrow, swarming galleries, wherein work is never ceasing. Spiders hang from their web and pounce on the unwary fly, and, fascinated by the beauty of the web, I cannot destroy it to give the fly its liberty—"beauty is its own excuse for being," and ease my conscience therewith.

Oh, good, good, good, to lie still, dreaming dreams, while the impossible becomes the accomplished, the ideal—the real. Mother Earth croons us her own unfathomable song. She pillows our heads on her bosom, and the soft fingers of her beauty smooth the lines of care from our brows. How the silence steals into our work-weary brains,

and her own spirit of serenity into the fretted, troubled heart. Gone the dust of the week, the tide that ebbed begins to flow again—a joy that is beyond words throbs through us—Mother Earth has given us of her life blood again.

Slowly the pageant of the hours passes. A kindly-faced Hebe at the house on the hill gives us of her best—cream, rich and fragrant; rosy apples that vie with each other, and those things necessary for the body, though not the soul. Then again we saunter over the grass, but though the hours pass slowly, 'tis surely, too. The birds are calling, the shadows are lengthening, and the earth sends up the incense of departing day.

As we saunter back along the way we came, we watch the birds. The fantail, with its laugh-compelling movements, slewed this way and that by its all-important tail. It regards us with friendly eyes, hopping quite close, now running swiftly after, some unfortunate insect that has sought safety close to the ground, now, with whirling flight, springing from branch to branch, its pale, whitey-grey breast revealing its whereabouts, which its head, back, and tail would fain hide. How long one remembers its quaint, pretty call.

More birds come twittering, darting, flashing here and there into the trees. The blue of the gaily-painted wagtail flutters about, like a loose blossom blown in the wind, and as its shadow the sober-garbed, faithful mate. A flash of vivid crimson, a moment seen, then hidden beneath wings of quaker drab, and a little head turns bright eyes upon us. The little fellow sits unafeard on the old grey post, and waits for us to pass—that vivid red back, like hibiscus petals, he will not show again. Tiny green fellows flit from twig to twig, the "peek peek" of their call ringing like fairy bells a-chime.

Ground larks run swiftly through the grass, or rise lightly to catch an insect on the wing.

From the standing scrub across the paddocks comes the evening carol of the magpies and the laugh of the jackass.

The clouds are soft, pale pink that deepens towards the

heart of the sunset into fullest rose and gold. The sun is sinking behind the great cliff-like belt of scrub, and the deep green of the day now turns to deepest purple in the shadow. What marvellous colours, changing each second—here a long, dazzling shaft of light breaking through a cloud of purple, golden rimmed; there a deeper tone to the pearly string of cloudlets; again a deeper value to the purples—the whole heavens one pageant of marvellous glory, and the earth reflects the glory in every blade of grass and quivering leaf. The scattered houses are gilded, and the windows are Midas-touched into burnished gold—it was a golden flood of life, and bathed the whole country side in its tide. “When we reflected that this was not a solitary phenomenon, never to happen again, but that it would happen for ever and ever an infinite number of evenings, and cheer and reassure the latest child that walked there, it was more glorious still.”

The sun has set, a sudden whisper stirs the leaves with a strange rustle, and a hush of expectancy lies on hill and hollow—not a “weird expectancy,” but serene.

Everything softens, the calls of far-off children, the twitter of birds close at hand. In the dusk the red glow of the apples burns out, and the lanterns of the pale quinces become luminous, and slowly, as though afraid it is too early to venture forth, a trembling star twinkles in the pale, high sky, but its sisters hasten, and soon “night has its thousand eyes.”

So we have sauntered through the holy land. And yonder the lights of the city gleam.

"Gran'ma."

Everyone seemed to have forgotten her—even death. But why should anyone remember her? Her son's wife was kind in a way—but it was a forgetting way. Alec's wife had so much to think of every day to make herself the picture she always was. Gran'ma had taken all the care of the babies off her shoulders in the early days; that was but one of the things forgotten. Meanwhile they grew up—her dead Alec's children.

The little old lady was the slave of the three children. Strong young Alec the Second she doted on, and to prove her affection he let her do all his errands, hunt for every missing article, and even take the blame for his misdeeds whenever she could. As for Tess and Nell—well, they never thought that Gran'ma was there for anything else but to fetch and carry for them, or spend hours working on dainty needlework till her old eyes ached.

So she had worked for them all through the long years—scarcely noting how the frost of time had crowned her head and leadened her feet. She was just Gran'ma.

To-day they were all away—a round of visits. Gran'ma had run about for them while they dressed, and promised to get all their mending done and see that the maid had things ready for tea. Her head grew dizzy trying to remember all. Then they went, and Gran'ma sought her old chair in the garden. She sat resting, her worn hands lying idly in her lap; a vague wonder came stealing into her mind, and the dear early dream time came back. John—her John—that she had waited for all her young years while he fought his fight against odds—and bested them—and the years of peace and gladness that followed till he died. The lined face grew beautiful as the memory grew clearer, and the tired hands folded themselves with tremulous gladness

in the sunshine—John, whose eyes smiled fondly from out the past. Theirs had been so different a life from everyone else's about her—even Alec her son and Helen his wife—but the little lady hushed the rebel thought. Alec was dead too, and his memory was growing faint. 'Twas John's that stood out the clearer now, and the children—why, they were her's and John's—and John was away.

The little lady looked around. All was peace beside her—a half-finished muslin dress of Tess's waiting some fine sewing; Alec's cricketing coat with a rent in it; Helen's torn ruffles; and Nell's gloves lay there too.

Gran'ma was tired; she did not know how tired—'twas the long tiredness of years of work for others, long after she should have been resting and young feet flying on errands for her.

She felt a strange pain, too—not the first time. Once she had spoken to Helen of it, and Alec's wife had said casually, "Oh, that's all right, Gran'ma; it will go away!" You see it didn't do to take too much notice. Helen did not mean to be unkind—'twas only just Gran'ma's aches and pains.

Gran'ma sat on while the sun crept around to the west—she was smiling happily and thinking tenderly of the children. She would do the mending in a few minutes.

Then a strange thing happened. John was bending over her—just the dear, tender John of old. His arm stole around her with tender, protecting care, and the little lady felt suddenly that she had longed to be cared for in that old way—how she had missed it! It was so long since such care had been taken of her. "Jennie," he was saying softly, "I've come back for you!"

"John, dear," the old voice quavered, "I'm so tired. I'm so glad you've come."

She laid her tired, old grey head on his shoulder, and catching his hand in hers pressed it against her heart as though to still the pain. Then she breathed deeply once or twice and closed her eyes contentedly.

The sunlight flashed from the blue waters, and the

birds flew about the garden with the chirrup of sunset hour, and hopped on the grass close to the silent little old lady.

When the long shadows had crossed the grass to her very feet, home came the children and their mother.

Nell—laughing, merry, selfish Nell—darted across the grass to see if her gloves were finished; but ere she reached she stopped abruptly. “Gran’ma asleep at this hour—why—why—” Nell felt the silence; she went closer; and then into her eyes came a fear, and she ran into the house.

“Gran’ma ill?” Helen said, crossly. “She’s sleeping—and nothing seen to in the house. What can she have done all the afternoon?”

Helen turned in her pettish annoyance and saw Nell’s face.

“Well,” she began; but without another word let her hat and gloves fall on the table and followed Nell to the garden.

Aye, Gran’ma was sleeping so sweetly. Her hands, worn and thin, were lying palm upwards in her lap, and her grey head was resting back on the cushion, her face turned up as though she had lifted it to someone bending over her.

“I never saw a look like that on Gran’ma’s face before,” said Nell, softly. But Helen wished she had been more kind all through the years.

Civilization.

" 'Life is wonderful—glorious.'

' Life is a delusion ; an illusion—a farce.'

So spoke a wise man and a fool ; which said each ?

—From the Arabian.

Once upon a time children played in the sunshine, and when they were hungry they trapped fish, fur and feather. So generations passed.

Then a woman came among them. Her hands were full of strange things, and her voice cast a spell. While she talked in low, sweet voice, the playthings fell from the children's hands, and a new intentness crept into their hitherto happy, careless faces.

When she began to move slowly on, they followed, unconscious that they did so. The beautiful woman, with the witch eyes and luring voice, altered their sight and cast a spell over their hearts and souls. Aye, her voice told them of wondrous things to be. Away yonder she would build a great city ; she would teach them how to make wonderful things ; they should spend their lives in so doing ; and to them it sounded great, grand.

At her bidding they built the city, and took their places at the treadmills of commerce. They slaved for the beautiful woman night and day. They saw their lives slipping away, but they had no time for play, for rest, for enjoying the sunshine ; for she urged them on. The wonderful thing they were weaving was worth millions of such little lives as theirs, and they shouted back to her their fidelity to her name.

If the woman laughed at their struggles they did not hear her ; for she had sealed their ears with the wax of use and wont and covered their eyes with the veil of neces-

sity, and they obeyed her faithfully, with eager, panting hearts. When weary feet faltered, younger ones poured into their places; hands grown frail and trembling yielded their work on to the white, untried hands of youth. They pressed eagerly on, urged by the siren voice that cried, "Work on, work on; just ahead is the wonderful thing."

So ever the vision of things to be, dances on ahead of the things that are.

"Aye, life is grand and good," these children said to each other continually. So spoke their lips—but their eyes—

Some—the fools—asked questions: Who was the lovely siren? They looked her steadily in the face, past those sparkling eyes and luring mouth, past the glamour of her smile and witching voice.

"Who are you?" they asked, coldly.

"Civilisation," she laughed back at them, serene in her power.

"And our debt to you?" the fools asked, bitterly.

"Is boundless," the woman smiled strangely.

"And the wonderful thing you promise us in return for the life-blood of generations?"

"Commerce."

"Is that all?"

Civilisation smiled. Only fools ask such questions; and she called Hunger to whip them back to work.

Outside the great smoky cities of Civilisation were heaps of refuse—such rubbish as worn-out workers and starved children; weak women, who could no longer keep up with the strain of existence and do the day's work at Civilisation's wages; old folks who belonged to no one in particular, and over whom the crowds had trampled. There were young lying there also, and men and women in middle life—victims of diseases which followed in the wake of the siren woman. There were also such odd ends as broken hearts that belonged to living people in there in the city—the dust of once-strong, reliable wills that the mills had ground too fine; and as to the ills—why, there was a whole

pack of them. But what is the dust-heap of the city to the glory of the city itself!

Out there are the plains of Barbarism. From the city the folks look curiously at them. Now and again a stray one goes out and is never heard of again. "He was a fool," they say, as they obey the shrill call of the factory whistle, the clarion of the market, or the daily treadmill of commerce in the stony streets and dull spaces enclosed with four walls. The strange horror of some dread possibility that seems in the very air they breathe, but makes them turn the mills faster; in the noise they may drown the still, small call from the wild yonder.

* * * * *

But who shall say which is the fool and which is the wise man?

While She Waited.

The man looked down at the girl pacing the deck beside him. "She is like you," he said, "and she's a regular brick. Has taken all the trouble of the house off her mother's hands since the dad died." The flower-like face of the girl became sympathetic.

"How long have you been away?" she asked.

"Just eight years."

"It's very hot up there, isn't it?" with seeming inconsequence. The man laughed heartily. "You have not lived in North Queensland to ask that." The girl laughed, too. Then, for no reason at all, she suddenly became silent. After they had gone three times round the deck she spoke again. "Are her eyes blue?"

"As blue as yours. You are like her. Her hair shines when the sun is on it. Allie is very pretty." He was glad, confident, why not? He was going home to marry the dearest, prettiest little girl in the States—Allie that he had dreamed of for eight years over in South Africa.

As they arrived at the wharf there stood little groups of people awaiting the boat. One little lady scanned the ship's deck closely, eagerly, now and then taking off cheap, clumsy glasses to ease the strain of the glare of the water on her pale, tired eyes. She was dressed in last year's fashion, well enough, perhaps, for "Up North," but to anyone coming fresh from the dainty maids of fashion "down South"— But it was a brave little face, even if its complexion had grown weary of the heat and toil. Presently she drew a long, deep breath of joy; into the faded blue eyes sprang gladness; the pale, thin cheeks flushed; she waved to the man on deck.

"Someone is waving to you," said the man to the girl beside him.

"Do you mean that little old dowdy with the glasses? I don't know her, but——"—a horrible suspicion crossing her mind in a flash—"do—do you think she is beckoning to you?"

"To me!" the man laughed. "Certainly not. I'm looking for little Allie."

The girl turned abruptly away; she had feared it—now she *knew*. Eight years, eight years of hard struggle in a hot country washes blue from the eyes and pink from the cheeks. She did not want to see the man when he, too, knew. He continued to look down with amusement on the dowdy little figure that was almost within speaking distance. At last something in the wistful joy in the plain, thin face arrested him. A horrible possibility became conviction. "My God! Allie!" broke from him. He half turned to fly from the spot. That Allie, whom he had left, pretty, sweet, and twenty? He had forgotten the years that the waiting had eaten.

His companion of the deck glided to his side. She looked at him with wisdom surpassing her years. "Eight years is a long time to wait," she said, softly, "but you will repay her? Good-bye."

The man hardly heard her, and did not notice her go swiftly down the deck. He was trying to know that odd little figure on the wharf before she came aboard. "Eight years," he repeated over and over again, "eight years, eight years."

“The Place.”

“The sentence of the court is that you be taken from this place to that from whence you came, to be hanged by the neck until you are dead—and may the Lord have mercy on your soul.”

Then the crowds in the court melted silently away, and I, the judge, gathered my robes about me, and moved slowly from that house of justice.

The doomed, a murderer, was safe in his cell, safe under lock and key.

Then came to me the man who should mete to the doomed the extreme penalty of the law.

He said, “Show me the place whereon I must hang the doomed.”

And I replied, “It stands where it has long stood.”

Then a strange thing happened; the power, the pomp, the machinery of the law faded, and I saw a great plain, whereon stood three people—the doomed, the executioner, and I, the judge.

“Where is the place, O judge? Show me, that justice may be appeased,” said the hangman, looking from the shrinking, terror-stricken figure, with fastened hands, to me, in the glory of judicial robes.

And I, the judge, pointed towards the north. “It is there,” I said, firmly, and stepped forward.

But even as I did so, came a voice from the north:

“Not here; not here is the place. This is the place of Reason—calm, lifting Reason. But vengeance of brutes—it is not here.”

At that, I, the judge, turned hastily. “It is in the south,” I said, “that we shall find the place.”

Then, as we turned about, and faced the south, we saw a woman. From her great, dark eyes came a light that

shone steadily. There was no trace of anger, passion or hatred on that broad, thoughtful brow.

"Oh, ye little mortals," she said, slowly. Yet I felt surely the very ends of the earth must hear the clear tones of that voice of marvellous clearness and gentleness.

"Oh, ye little mortals," she said again, with sad seriousness, "how have ye forgotten me, that ye look for that place in the south? Know ye not that, though ye have built great courts to my name? Do ye know me? Come closer, look deep into my eyes, learn the sound of my voice. That place is not here. Yet ye shall surely find it. Eye shall surely find it."

As I turned from the woman I saw the white, drawn face of the doomed. It was brutalised. Had it ever a trace of humanity? I shuddered. Truly, he were better dead. I turned with sudden loathing from him.

"It is in the east," I said, coldly; and moved quickly across the plain.

"Yes, truly, this time have we found the place," said the hangman, calmly, "for I see a shadow lying over the plain; yet a long way off, and—"

Then he paused, for we saw that which cast the shadow.

It was a wondrous seat—so long it lost itself on either side of the immense distances; so broad, that the other edge was hidden also. And, standing upon it, Mercy; her eyes, filled with pity, were fixed upon the doomed.

"What would you?" she said, gently.

Then I, the judge, spoke sternly. "We seek the place where justice is appeased. Where shall we take the life of this man, the doomed?"

And the doomed man trembled, and around him saw no way of escape, for the hand of the hangman was on his shoulder.

The shadow deepened in her eyes, and Mercy came a step nearer.

"It is not here," she said, "for here is that mercy you pray the Lord to grant, and deny yourself. The place is not here."

Then, again, we turned. The doomed turned last of all, for his gleaming eyes of hate had fastened themselves on the soft tenderness of the eyes looking down on him, and for an instant hate paled, and for that space of time I saw a different look in them.

"It must be in the west," I said, gravely, for some strange feeling was at work in me.

The light of the setting sun lay along the plain. Every blade of grass cast a long, soft shadow; but no other shadow fell on the soft, radiant light that almost seemed to warm into human likeness the face of the doomed.

But in all that western glory of light we could see no gallows against the sky.

Across the bowed, trembling, doomed man the eyes of the hangman sought mine. "Where is the place?" he asked me, mutely.

And then before us, in the west, we saw a man advancing. A light gleamed from His eyes, and His whole being seemed so majestic that the doomed sank down on the earth, and I bowed my head in shame for I knew not what.

"You look for that place." The voice rang clear, yet each word dropped like balm on troubled hearts. "It is not in the west, for here humanity to man alone is found. What has he done?"

And I, the judge, looked up eagerly; now I could justify myself; but even as I opened my lips to utter his crime I became mute.

"Thou shalt not kill," the glorious Man was speaking again. "Shall his be the only ears to hear it? Thou shalt not kill; and I say it unto you also, judge and hangman of men's laws."

"You have looked for that place in the north. It is not there, for there Reason has her place. Is it calm, human reason, in a life for a life, or survival of brute instincts, which has doomed this man?

"Ye shall not find it in the south. True Justice seeks not revenge, and are your laws higher than his? Do ye

not unto the doomed, in calm decision, just that which he, in fury of passion and ignorance, meted out to his victim? In the east ye have found Mercy, and do ye not say, 'That is the Lord's, not ours?'

Then a quiver crept into the grand voice. A subtle radiance breathed from Him. "In the west ye found me, Humanity, that knows not the shadow of that place ye seek; for I would lift up, not sink also, myself, unto that man's level. It is not here—north, south, east, west."

And even as He spoke, anguish welled up into the beautiful voice. Over the broad, high brow came a cloud of awful sorrow. His hands were stretched in greatest yearning towards the city we had left. Then, again, His voice came ringing, and every word rang with truth—

"Would you find 'the place' you have built?" He cried. "Look into the heart of yonder city! See the ignorance, the crime, the misery, the festering sores that break out in such vile deeds! You! you! the virtuous, with your lives laid in pleasant places; what heed do you pay to the cries and the temptings of your fellow men? Are you even one brother's keeper? Does your heart's indignation burn up even one of the miseries? Ye see the causes and wonder at the effect, and doom such as he."

Then a silence followed the burning words. I, the judge, stood silent, also, even as the doomed.

"It is not here," came the voice, again. "In your cities ye have built that place; with souls ye have driven its nails firmly; the steps that lead up to it are ignorance and sordidness of lives. Until you lead them from out its shadow, will you find them stumbling up those steps to their shameful death, under the law."

We looked towards the city, with its domes and spires lifting up into the golden light, and knew of the shadow below.

Then Humanity spoke again. "I speak with the wisdom of the ages, not of a single mortal's span of life. Where the place stands, let the sunshine stream in. Where the shadow now falls, turn up the ground and plant the flowers

of strength, beauty, truth, honour and love. Take away the planks of ignorance that lie rotting there, and build the temple of true knowledge. My little children, what came ye out to seek? There is no 'place' except ye build it, and who are you to dare?"

• • • •

And I, the judge, am thinking.

At The Portals.

The woman was tired—tired ere her prime. “I want rest, rest,” she said. I looked at the worn face; young in years, that should have been glowing. I felt a sudden rush of loving sympathy. I wanted to fold her close, and give her that which life had failed to bestow—a little time to rest the weary body, and allow her soul to breathe and expand.

That was in the morning, and at night another weary woman came to me. “I am tired, tired,” she said. I had no word, I could not speak, but from my heart the flood gates rolled back. Oh! that I could lift the burden that is crushing her down; could give the dainty little head a resting-place from the storms that beat, beat upon her frail form.

This life struggle; why do we struggle, why do we not lay the burden down; what is this conspiracy of Nature’s that drives us on, on, though we long for rest? She is so dainty, so tiny, so frail, but the wind beats as harshly upon the pale azalea as upon the strong poplar’s fluttering branches.

When I awoke next morning, I thought of these two of the day before. How many more are carrying that dead burden beneath smiling faces and bravely-moving limbs? To-day I met another. I noted the care that concealed, and the moment’s half abandonment that revealed. She chattered brightly about her work, present and to be; she hoped to do good work some day when—. It was then that I suddenly saw the worm at the root of her life, the struggle for a living, the dread of the time coming when she would be less able.

Neither spoke. Into our woman’s eyes flashed the understanding. What woman does not know that lurking terror which lies crouching at the portals? When does the

first fear of it come? I cannot tell; we seem born with it—a spectre—call it what you will—that dogs our steps.

What she said, that friend of mine, after that matters little. I had read all then—the desperate little ways and means, the attempts to save, the brave struggle to make a margin. Night by night the putting of a single drop into a cup, gathered to cool and appease the starving throat of those far-off years. Ashamed at having laid bare her heart and mine, she threw up her head and laughed. Though it did not ring true, I knew the bell was pure gold. Come what would, here was a brave fighter, who would fight to a finish, not for love of life, but because she was alive.

Is this weariness of the struggle growing? Is this all that civilisation gives us? These three are types, not weaker or stronger than most. Had you looked once into their eyes you had known their strength; but are not circumstances stronger than an army? Is any woman strong enough to overcome for ever, each successive wave that dashes on the beach of her life?

Let us reach out our hands. Be kind, oh, my sisters, because of that which crouches at the portals. Be more than kind to every wayfarer, because of that which crouches at the portals. I feel as I contemplate the individual woe, as the Christ must have felt when He looked upon that city. Would that I could gather each one of you into my arms, and give you rest—only rest, and then all things would be added thereto.

Rich woman, poor woman, beggar, match seller, mother with her little crowd about her; old, sitting with clasped hands, the time of doing over, the time of being nearly over; joyous young flower in full glory; fading, lonely woman. God, how I love them! I want to take their hands in mine. Dear ones, each one of you, even you who pass outcast in the street, I know and love you all; I want to give you something, somehow to help you—how I know not, but somehow.

I remember that crouching at the portal, and my heart goes out to you each and all.

“The Moving Finger.”

The woman lay in a happy dream; the firelight flickering over her face saw the sudden smiles that crept about her lips and soft-closed eyes. Her arms moved gently in her dream. In her dream she sat in a sunny little room; in her arms a laughing baby played. With passionate tenderness she gathered the child close to her, kissing the baby curls, the soft little feet; pressing the little pink hands against her lips. Then Adam, dear Adam (in her sleep her smile grew), threw about them both his loving arms and drew them close. With a low laugh of pure joy the woman awoke. She lay silently happy, watching the dancing firelight. The depths of her nature were also awake and thrilling to the touch of the dream. Then again she slept and dreamed.

This time she stood in a long room. All that loving care could devise lay about her, and as though merely a spectator, she saw herself—this time years older—standing by a table, one hand pressed heavily on its polished surface, as though to support her trembling frame. She saw her own face turned with strained anguish toward a door at the far end of the room. The door opened and a man came slowly in. And the dreamer knew that the man was Adam. When he saw her by the table a sudden tenderness flashed over his stricken face. The woman by the table did not seem to move; only her eyes fastened on his with an intensity that turned them to coals of fire. Without a word he folded her in his arms.

In her sleep the woman stirred; a sigh broke from her; in the silence of her dream her husband spoke. “Be brave,” he said. She saw the woman that was herself shudder. “Tell me, is it the worst?”

He bowed his head. “It is the worst; our child is

insane—insane." The woman of the dream hid her face while the man spoke on.

"I cannot understand why our child should be—I cannot understand—" He broke off; his stricken face bowed itself lower.

The dreamer saw the woman of the dream with sudden violence fling herself from the man's arms. With streaming eyes she heard herself laugh the wild laugh that comes from the broken-hearted.

"I lied to you," she said. "I have always known . . . it is in my family . . . but I could not give you up . . . and after I would not . . . and then I hoped and prayed . . . I prayed . . . oh, Adam—"

Her own cry of anguish awoke the sleeper; she lay still. The fire had vanished behind grey ash, and the pale dawn was stealing into the room. Henceforth for her the grey ash. "Dare I forget the warning . . . dare I attempt to frustrate Fate . . . dare I . . . dare I? My God, I dare do nothing . . . oh, my laughing baby."

"The Moving Finger writes, and having writ
Moves on."

Before the Altar.

So weary! so weary of struggling! Thus I thought, this bright summer afternoon, as I paced along in the sunshine.

After the week's care and worries, Sunday came like a blessing. Yet—ah, yet the six day's worry cast a shadow over the seventh, and my thoughts strayed on the coming week, which seemed to promise no better outlook.

Just then I paused before an old-fashioned, bluestone church, almost covered with a beautiful mantle of green ivy—"St. Mary's." The old porch seemed to welcome me in.

Slowly I passed through the churchyard and ascended the three steps, then noiselessly and with reverence entered the sacred house.

Far in the distance stood the beautiful altar; a bright ray of light through the stained window threw a rich crimson band over the gleaming white marble and glittering silver.

The marble steps were flecked with radiant colours, as though set with jewels. The white lilies seemed to take a sudden glory in the right light—so beautiful, that my heart went out in impulsive adoration. Then like a magnet the beautiful altar drew me on. Down the long shadowed aisle I moved towards the glory, even unto the altar rails. Then I knelt before the shrine, wrapt in the dream of beauty.

As one dreaming I watched the crimson sun-ray as slowly, slowly, it grew over the altar piece, touching all with singular beauty.

My eyes followed the sunbeam until it reached the beautiful figure of Christ, the soft light playing on the calm, sweet lips, throwing shadows in the loving eyes, lighting with strange radiance, the broad, thoughtful brow.

Then I said reverently, "*Jesus Christ.*"

I said it softly, yet with loving reverence, and, even as it died away on my lips, I saw that into the sweet eyes seemed to come life; the lips moved as if breath was fluttering on them.

Surely I must be mistaken!

No! For gently the hand which had been raised in blessing fell softly to His side, the stiff marble robe became gently undulating, and into the rigid figure came breathing, pulsing life. Then, as I gazed speechless in my wonderment, Christ descended and came towards me. His eyes were lit with surpassing love, and before His majesty I was dumb.

"*Child of earth, why art thou cast down?*" said He to

As I heard Him speak, and felt in my inmost being the wondrous thrill of magnetic sympathy in His voice, I knew how He had drawn the multitudes of old.

I answered not, only lifting my weary, troubled eyes to the face above.

Again Christ spoke: "*Thou shalt see three visions, and then tell me if thou hast any sorrows like unto these.*"

Even as Christ spoke, the beautiful altar with the white lilies bathed in golden glory faded slowly from my sight, until nothing but a mist remained.

"*Look on another's woe!*"

And I beheld—a tiny room, so bare, cold and miserable that I shivered. Then I saw the room held two human beings—one a woman, who, with trembling fingers, was sewing some heavy stuff, and by her side, lying in an old broken box, was a babe, its little face pinched and haggard, its hands like tiny claws, so thin! In the corner stood an open cupboard, but it was *empty*. The mother was trying to hush the wailing babe to sleep, and at the same time go on with her work. But the baby only wailed more pitifully. On the faces of the mother and child I read starvation. As I looked on their misery the mother rose wearily to soothe the child, when suddenly a cry, a wild, heart-broken cry,

rang through the room, and the mother fell by the child—*dead*.

The babe, hushed at the wild cry, then wailed on piteously—*alone*.

I could bear it no longer, that cry rang in my heart. I covered my face. And I heard the sweet voice saying, in tones of deepest sadness:

“And yet I said in the beginning, ‘Feed my lambs.’”

No reproach; only such sadness, such sadness.

“Look again,” said Christ.

It was a hospital ward, and slowly we moved through it. Oh; the world of pain and suffering. Their white faces and pain-dulled eyes filled my heart with sorrow. As we passed each patient, some who were raving suddenly quietened; a pain-racked sufferer smiled in a minute's ease from pain; some gently murmured in their sleep—for Christ was passing by. We came to the end of the ward, and there, reflected in a large mirror, I saw myself in the full pride of health and strength. And I had murmured against my lot!

“Look yet again,” said the loving voice. A beautiful room was before me, so perfect in its artistic beauty that I held my breath in wonder. At the end of the room was a bed with richest hangings. At the foot of the bed knelt two persons, a man and a woman, with bowed grey heads. I could not see their faces, they were hidden in the white silken coverlet. A grey curl has escaped from restraint, and hung over the woman's shoulder with a pathetic loneliness. Convulsive sobs shook the aged couple. I said softly, “Why do they weep?”

Then the hangings fell back, and lying on the bed I saw a man in the prime of life: a strong, manly form, with noble face.

But it was the face of the dead. Who now would close the lonely parents' eyes for their long last sleep? I thought of my brave, strong boy, and I wept with the bereaved.

The vision faded, and the altar came back, the light still played on the lilies, and Christ was speaking.

*"Hast thou not enough to eat, and priceless health?
Thy dearest are ever with thee. All these thou hast, and
yet thou growest weary when the road of life is hard and
thorny."*

My troubled eyes looked into the eyes above.

*"Give of thy love and thou shalt have a thousand fold.
Feed the little ones and the widow; comfort the mourners;
those who are sick heal, and help to bear their cross, and in
so doing thine shall be lightened."*

Slowly He raised His hands over my head and blessed me—*"Peace be with you."*

New strength entered me, a burst of heavenly music filled the sacred air. I arose and—

* * *

The light had faded from the altar; the lilies were gleaming purely white in the shadowy evening light; and Christ was standing with raised hand as before.

The music was real, for from the old church organ a master hand was drawing tones of penetrating sweetness.

Had I dreamed? or had Christ really spoken to me?

I know not! Only still I hear that wondrous voice blessing me, and see the tender eyes beaming with love.

Then I arose from the altar steps, and reverently left the sacred place as the music rolled on through the darkening aisle, on, on to the beautiful altar and Christ.

At Last.

In the silver of his years, this, the great desire of his life, had come to pass—he was a great artist at last.

The world rang with his name, and, with wondering worship, crowds stood silent before his masterpiece, which hung “on the line” in the place of honour.

They—the world who understood such things—said, “It is a masterpiece, a thing of beauty for ever.”

That little canvas—once worthless—was now priceless by the marvellous work upon its surface—a sunset, with the light shining across the rippling water.

And he—the artist? When the crowds had gone their ways, he went silently to the great salon and stood before the picture.

He raised his old, life-lined face to its glowing beauty. A light of exultation filled his eyes, and joy overspread his face, so that it looked almost young again.

“My picture, my work!” he said, softly, tenderly. “It will live for aye. My life has been well spent, with this as its crown.”

And soon—he slept. His life work finished.

* * *

Over the tumbled waters the last gleam of sunset flashed. Away against the glowing, gleaming west, the wide, dark sails of a ship were spread. The wind had only strength to move with soft rustling the ti-tree scrub along the shore, and lift, with merry play, the breaking crests of the laughing waters, so that, as they rose, they fell again in sparkling showers. Oh! beautiful, laughing, living world!

Along the sands two children ran. The quivering sunlight and dying kissed their bright, glad faces, and played in their streaming hair. Their sweet, childish trebles made

music, ere day died, with peals of merry laughter, as they danced with bare little feet where the rippling waters stayed. And my heart was glad in their glee.

Then the children went away, and silence came back. Where they had played a purple shadow was stealing towards the low ti-tree. The light died in the west; the tiny waves sank, with low sobbing, back into the great mother heart of gray. Over the waters, with wild, plaintive cry, a lonely seagull flew and passed, with quick, winged flight, on into the darkening night.

The pink had gone, the blue was changing with quick, silent mystery, into deepest ebon, and the stars in myriads came glinting out. There, by the ironstone cliff, the slow, deep sound of the pulse of the waters, and over the dark, moving plain, a quiet as of sleep. There, where the sands curve into a miniature bay, the tide rolls up with its own unfathomable song.

And, last, a silver crescent hangs low in the starry depths, and night, silent, beautiful night, has come.

O, beautiful world, ever changing! In your great space and exquisite life, where are the few inches of canvas-paint man lives his life to make? Enough for me the beauty which lasts but for an hour.

* * *

His life was over. The whole world sorrowed. Tenderly, reverently, they carried him to rest in their great Temple of Death, and princes walked beside him. Their voices were hushed.

“He painted a great picture—a joy for all time,” they said softly, “and after much toiling he was crowned at last.” Then they added sadly, “His sunset! *who will paint us another?*”

* * *

And to each day is given a sunset. It lasts but for a breathing space and passes away. Man alone paints—for aye.

Nearing the Gate.

His face was thin and haggard, a fear yet not terror, looked out from his eyes, for he was uncertain. She came slowly; her grave clothes all white and clinging, her eyes weary but serene.

Life lay behind the misty curtain that hung at the end of the path that led to the great gate yonder, and a strange stillness filled the air. The man had just emerged from the wavering curtain of mist when the woman drifted through. She looked into the man's eyes, then in the silence she stretched out her hand; he took it in his, and together they moved along toward the gate. Though the woman moved with slow weariness, from her whole form a strange radiance gleamed.

Still with his hand in hers she spoke softly, "Tell me ere we reach the gate has Life given all that you desired; has your heart held as truth all that your lips said when young?"

The man's face quivered, but his voice was low and steady. "I have ever tried to live to my conception of the truth; for that I loosed your hand from mine when your love was the very joy of my life."

"A curious smile of tender pity crept over the woman's face. "Aye, be not unequally yoked. I remember you had a creed that was not mine, though I endeavoured to make my life beautiful, true to the end. I was not worthy to walk the way of mortality with you." Then the stern voice suddenly melted into the tenderness of love. "Oh, little soul, you doubted the boundlessness of God's love. You feared to link your life with mine—me, whom you judged by your human standard, not by God's." Her hand rested lovingly on his arm. "You put me out of your life, but the love remained; your fireside was lone; no child brightened it with

love and laughter. Know you not that that love which you sought to root out—that beautiful love—was the most God-like thing of your whole life?"

The man trembled; the lonely years flashed over him, and one line of his creed had stood between them. His companion smiled softly as she turned her eyes toward the gate they neared. "Tell me what lies beyond?"

"I know not——"

"And I know not."

Their eyes met steadily. They moved on ever closer to the great gate.

"You believed Life," she said, "and I thought that Sleep awaits us there; meantime we loved truth, and each other," A wave passed over her tired face, and slowly she continued. "Now we shall know, but I fear nothing. Sleep and rest if it be. Rest were a boon. The world was cruel and stormy. It has so buffeted me that, before the allotted span, I am weary, weary, and am coming home to rest. At the worst there's rest."

"But," he said, "you have doubted."

She bowed her head. "As my sin, so let my punishment be. Yet have I believed in Humanity, for it have I laboured; my hand has stolen out to help it while you knelt in prayer—while your church rang with praise to God I listened to the deep undertones of a great city."

"Works cannot save you," the man answered—so he had spoken all his life. Before the woman could reply some strange force separated them. And near the first gate they had seen there was a second. Alone the woman reached that one at the end of her path. Her true spirit shone from her eyes, sweeter became her voice: "Through the gate of Death each must go alone, and for each soul its own gate."

She leaned her tired head lovingly against the gate; her arms clung tenderly to its heavy bars; as ivy clings against the wall so leaned she trustfully against the great gate, her life in the lines of her face, the sweetness in her eyes.

At his gate the man stood. At the last moment had come the thought, "How dared I judge, and under my

man's judgment affix the seal of my God?" In that instant he realised. "Forgive me, oh woman, and my God!" he cried, entreatingly.

Again his eyes and the woman's met, and the triumphant gladness from hers flashed upon him. She, with her unbelief held firmly in her hands, asking justice, would receive mercy—and that not man's. In that thought a grandeur encircled him; he smiled a farewell and entered at the gate that opened before him.

At her gate, with wide eyes of peace, of love for the world behind her, the woman paused a moment longer, then softly the gate swung wide for her, and she passed through.

The Lily and the Rose.

The Master looked round at his children, and, taking two beautiful souls in his hands, called Life to him. "Take these two souls to earth," he said, "and let Sorrow know them, so that when thy twin brother, Death, shall bring them back they may have gained added beauty."

Sorrow drew near as Life took the lovely souls from the Master. She came so silently, in her sandals of pain, and a deep, sweet seriousness shone from her eyes. She looked at the Master; then at the two sleeping souls soon to be human, and she grew pitiful. "Little ones," she said, softly, to the sleepers, "forgive me if I seem cruel in the days to come, for it is written 'through Sorrow only shalt thou become wise and noble.'"

Even as Sorrow, the silent one, ceased speaking, a rush of gladness came through the air, and laughing Joy stood in shining glory before the Master.

"Oh, Master, give one of these souls to me; let me make it wise and noble."

But the Master smiled gently. "It may not be; how can a mortal become noble if Sorrow, thy twin sister, touch him not?"

Then Joy, of the shining eyes, took her sister by the hand and smiled into her deep, dark eyes. "Sister mine, give but one soul to me. Let me teach it through happiness how to rise to its highest self. Let me unfold all the buds to the perfect flower. Ah! surely Joy can make beautiful as well as Sorrow."

Joy was so lovely, her laughing voice trembled so earnestly that Sorrow took her twin sister's hand in hers, and kissed the high, white brow. "Master, let it be even as my sister begs. Let her give joy, full and pure, through all the life of one of these two souls, and when the end shall come

let us again stand before thee with the flowers of their lives in our hands—each as moulded by Joy and by Sorrow; then shall we know whether Joy or Sorrow gives the greater beauty.”

“Have then thy wish,” said the Master.

* * *

Life took the two souls to earth—little human buds. The lot of one was cast in high places; the lot of the other was lowly. One laughed through life, making sunshine wherever her feet trod. Sick faces lit up at sound of her voice; sad hearts leapt at clasp of her hands. Everywhere she taught the gospel of gladness.

When she saw sorrow, the happiness within her rushed forth, gushing over to relieve, and the great gladness within made her pitiful, for she said, “There is much sorrow; let me bring my gladness to these fainting hearts.” The lamp of her sweet eyes lit the darkness of the world, and that the cries of pain should cease she taught mortals to sing and laugh. Life she made joyous, slipping everywhere her sunshine into the drear domain of Sorrow, save into the one young soul especially commended into Sorrow’s keeping. Her she visited not.

Sorrow stood steadfastly by the side of the soul committed to her care. Gently she moulded it to perfect form. Tears that fell, and sighs that came from that sad heart, shaped the life to perfection. All who looked on that sweet face marvelled at its beauty, and said, “She is an angel of goodness; her tears flow with ours; she knows our trials and sorrows. How rare her soul.”

* * *

Sorrow and Joy stood before the Master, each holding the perfect flower of a human life in her hands. Laughing Joy held her rose of life toward the Master. “Behold, Master of all; see the beauty of this flower. With joy did I unfold each curling leaf, and with gladness did I colour it. Surely Sorrow cannot mould aught more beautiful?”

The Master gathered both flowers, and looked at them long and lovingly—the Lily and the Rose.

“Thou art right, oh, Joy of Life. Henceforth thou shalt share with thy sister Sorrow in the making of all that is truest and best in humanity.”

Then the twin sisters clasped hands—Sorrow, with the silent footfalls of pain, and Joy, with the winged feet of gladness—and sped back to the little earth whereon men live.

Grace.

An Allegory.

The long, sad day is over, and night has come at last; night with its stillness, its beauty, and peace. I sit at my open window, and look out into the moonlight. Close up to my little garden gate run the sands, and I look over the silent, glittering sea.

In a numbed kind of way, I noticed the long ribbon of sand, stretching away in waving lines so white and smooth. The water scarcely seemed to move, only the moonlight threw a soft sheen over it. I saw the quiet beauty of the scene, yet I could not rejoice in it, for on my life had fallen a cloud so thick and black that everything was shadowed.

What to me was the beautiful world? A low, bitter cry broke from me. I threw back my tumbled hair from my brow, and leaned from my window into the cool, quiet air. Then a soft, fresh breeze came lightly across the quiet water; it kissed my hot, throbbing brow with cool gentleness, and seemed to whisper, "sleep! poor weary, sorrowing soul. Sleep!"

"Sleep!" I murmur. I cannot sleep, when so close to me is a quiet room, where ONE is sleeping a quiet sleep, and I am left here alone. "Sleep! Ah, no, unless it be the same quiet sleep."

And the breeze passed on in sad murmuring for my sorrow, but I still sat looking out at the beautiful night, the shining sea, with the bitter anguish in my heart for my lovely dead, my lost beloved.

In the quiet which followed, I felt as though I could think no longer, my strength was exhausted, my weary head fell upon my folded arms and I slept. And in the deep sleep, there came to me a dream, strangely real, like some

rare, beautiful blossom floating from some unknown world, and alighting on a torn and bruised heart.

* * *

In my dream I was walking along a sandy beach, and listening to the low murmur of the lapping waves. Over everything streamed the glorious, golden, shining sun. The world was awake with marvellous, beautiful life. My heart was light, and my soul poured forth a joyous song, spontaneous as the carol of the lark. Ah! I drew my breath with delicious gladness at my very life.

Then in the distance, on the bright, moving waters, I saw a boat coming towards me. There was something wonderfully beautiful about it; the sail was the colour of a rare pink rose, soft and lovely; and the glistening sides of the boat seemed like unto transparent, gleaming, mother o' pearl.

As the boat sped towards me, I saw standing on its prow a woman. Even at a great distance I could see her face, and, as I watched it, she seemed to grow into my very being.

As the boat glided over the dancing water, I waited for her, where the laughing waves kiss the sands. Nearer and nearer she came, and a great silence fell over the world, but I was as one who is created and awaits *that* which is to give life.

The boat was near, so near that I heard the keel touch the loose, pebbly bottom, with musical clinking, and then she stood before me. Her face was illumined with a great light, such as to me was never on woman's face before; and her very soul seemed to gaze from those deep, beautiful eyes into mine.

I smiled, and held out my hands towards her. Then she sprang lightly from the boat, and caught my hands in hers. A radiance was over the world; a something I had not imagined could be. At her touch life came, and I was completed.

Then she spoke in low, sweet tones, "Beloved! I have

sought thee long. Over great seas I have sailed, looking, looking for thee, and I have found thee, oh, my beloved!"

And my only answer was a soft echo of her words, "I have found thee, oh, my beloved!"

Then we turned, and walked hand in hand along the golden sands. How beautiful was the world! The shells, lying wet and glistening by the water's edge, were lovelier as my beloved held them towards me in her hands, their delicate beauty more beautiful. I caught the fragile seaweed as the ocean drew it back, and held it to my beloved. Was ever simple seaweed so lovely before? Along the sands we wandered, pouring out our heart and soul in perfect communion.

"Oh, gentle one!" I cried in my joy, "thou hast made my life perfect. The world is lovely, but I love it not, for I love thee before all the world!"

"Beloved!" she answered, sadly, "Ah! I had forgotten the world. You are my world; where thou art I would be." She softly smiled as she wound her arm in mine.

"Hush!" I whisper, "We will stay here in the beauty, away from the world, with its harsh, jarring chords, its hard duties and troubles. We will stay here in the beauty, where everything harmonises with our love."

We watched the sun as slowly it began to set, then we sat down on the sands, and watched the banks of pinky clouds, the deep gold of the setting sun over the tinted, sparkling, golden water. The west was a magnificent glow of colour, and the great sea but reflected the glory. A grey gull flew screaming across the vivid sky, and settled on the cliff above. That was the only sound, save the low murmuring of the tranquil sea.

We were silent. In the twilight, which was creeping on, we cared not to break the peace of beautiful, changing nature.

When the last quivering gleam of colour had vanished, and, over the world evening shadows were descending, and tiny stars peeping out shyly in the sky above, I felt something become silent. In the silence it was as though we had been

talking aloud and suddenly paused, and yet we had spoken no word.

I looked at the face of my beloved, and I saw she was sleeping softly, with a calm, quiet smile on her face, as though she had closed her eyes in a beautiful thought. I knelt at her side on the warm, soft sand, and took her head in my arms, gently smoothing the dark hair from her broad, white brow. Then I forgot the rippling sea, and the evening star shining before me, for I watched my sleeping one.

* * *

“ Watcher! I say unto thee watch no longer!”

I looked up, and before me stood a stranger. He was very, very old, yet firm and strong, and over the lined old face was a kindly smile; there was a peculiar gentleness about him as though he could touch a child (of any age) as softly as one rose, swinging on its bough, touches another.

I felt no fear of this stranger, for his face was one of trust; only I wondered why he should say, “ Watch no longer!”

I saw on the sea a boat, pure white and clear as crystal, with masses of white flowers filling it.

I knew he must have come in that boat.

My beloved still slept, so I held up my hand: “ Hush! she sleeps; do not wake her!”

But the stranger gently took her in his arms, and I was powerless to move, while he carried her to his boat and laid her among the beautiful flowers.

Then I sprang forward, saying: “ Let me go with you also. I cannot leave my beloved, who has but just found me. Thou shalt take me too.”

A strange smile crossed the kindly old face: “ Child, dost thou not know me yet? 'Twas not for thee I came, but for thy beloved. Thy time is not yet.”

The boat was moving gently on the water, and I followed in the cool, sparkling foam, but I found I could not move beyond ankle deep, and I cried in my distress: “ Who art thou? Why dost thou take my beloved?”

"Ye mortals call me Death. See! the life of this soul lies around her; the white blossoms of a blameless life, of good deeds, pure thoughts, kindly love to all, they pillow her head in beauty. Perchance, if thou wert called now, would such flowers as these enfold thee?"

He looked gravely into my eyes, but sorrow for my love filled me, and I cried to him: "Oh, spare me my love! Take all else, and I will be such as mortal never was before. But if thou takest my life, my love, what is left? A void which never can be filled, and a sorrow greater than man ever had, greater than I can bear!"

I held out my arms for my beloved beseechingly, tremblingly, though I knew I could not change the grim, kind face before me.

"It cannot be," Death said quietly, and I could answer not for the great pain in my heart.

The boat was gently gliding away from me. Through the crystal side I could see my sleeping love smiling, as though she had not left me alone, and then I heard a kind, grave voice saying: "Mortal! once thou saidst 'all the world was not to thee as thy love!' Now I say, thy love has left thee, and the world must take her place. For even as thou art to the world, so will thy love be to thee. Thy love will not return until thou lovest all the world. Go back, for only from it shall comfort come. Go! thou art happier, for thou hast known love. And your beloved, hush! do not wake her with thy grief. See! she is sleeping, she is happy. Do you not grieve, but comfort those whose sorrows are greater than yours; for I say there are heavier sorrows to bear than thine, for she is safe in my keeping, and my keeping is in love. Go! do that which is before thee, that thou mayest be ready when I come."

It was the cool breeze which wafted to me the last words, for the boat was far out on the beautiful sea, and was fading from my sight.

"Oh! beloved, to have known thee, and to lose thee!" And, with a bitter cry, I threw myself on the sand, and

buried my face to shut out the shining sea, with the moonlight turning it to silver, from my gaze.

* * *

I awoke from my dream. I turned from the window and the starlit sea, and fell on my bed; the dream had brought my love so vividly before me, for in the dream my love was the same as she who lay sleeping so near me. It only made clearer my great loss, and my heart cried out for some help to bear its pain, to bind the broken life. Out of the darkness of the room came no answer, and I lay there trying of the old life to find that wherewith to take up the new grey life, which would begin on the morrow. And then I slept, and again I dreamed.

* * *

I had left the sparkling sea with its lovely world, its dream of love and sorrow, and it was through the world of men I walked.

There was a blank within me, which seemed to deprive me of sight, so that I passed many sorrows, which I might have healed.

When some people spoke to me, I turned my stricken face to them, and, pointing to my robes of grief, I asked sadly, "Why do ye talk to me, see ye not that I sorrow for the dead? What interest hath this world for me? I am only waiting for death to call me also. Trouble me not!" And they shrank back.

Even the little, laughing babies stayed in their mirth as my shadow crossed them. I was wrapt in myself and grew dead, even though I lived.

But once, as I sat alone brooding over my loss, suddenly my name was called, softly, lovingly, even as she had spoken. I turned. Standing at my side was a woman; a glory beamed from her eyes, and a great light radiated above her.

"Why sittest thou here in grief?" she asked of me.

"Ah!" I answered, sadly, "thou must surely know.

Since all the world is dead, for *she* is dead, my love is dead, there is nothing but to wait until I go to her."

"And, thinkest thou that thou wilt be worthy to go to her if thou stayest here bound in self?" I looked at the bright, sweet face, but sadly shook my head. Such brightness could not understand my gloom. "Thou understandest not! I have no one in this great world to love me, none to love me. There is no sorrow like unto my sorrow. I must sorrow alone."

But, unlike others, she did not leave me to my grief. Instead, she took my hand and said quickly, "Come with me! let me show you sorrows which are not like your sorrow, for they are greater and harder to bear. Come! and then when thou hast seen thou shalt return to thy sorrow and thy grey robes—if thou wilt." And with her I went.

Our wanderings would take long to tell. But the sorrows I witnessed seemed to hold me in some terrible spell. Aye, I saw love also, but sometimes it was so hidden that I felt it was not there at all. Then love was given to so many in such different aspects, and sorrow, I found, was all through the world. Some sorrows had a bitterness which death could not bring.

I saw the tottering, grey-haired father as he gazed on his only child, the son of his dead, dear wife; I saw the agony which rent his heart as the prison gates closed behind his boy, and he tottered on, in life doubly bereft. That sorrow was not like to mine; there was bitterness of shame in it.

I saw a mother's grief for her first-born. I heard her agonised cry, "Why?" As it burst from her heart my companion glided to her side and whispered softly, "So he giveth his beloved sleep." And a peace seemed to settle upon her. That sorrow was as heavy as mine. And I knew that others sorrowed even as I did, that I was not alone, also that some had griefs which were heavier to bear than mine. Like a light the selfishness of my life flashed on me. "Oh!" I cried in shame, "my sorrow is a joy! Forgive my plaint. Let me help the sorrows which

are heavier than mine. Let me use my light to brighten others. Let me bless that I may be blessed. You are right! I want not to return to my grief. Aye, let me, also, weave a garland. Let me love those who need me."

I turned my face towards my friendly guide, my heart so earnest, longing to *do* something in love. And lo, even as I looked on her face I saw the face of my beloved; her bright, beautiful eyes were glowing into mine; she was standing, glorified, before me.

"Beloved! thou hast come for me!" I cried in joy, and moved towards her.

"Not yet, not yet," she answered me in her pure, sweet voice. "'Tis this which has brought me. Oh, my beloved, in loving the whole world thou hast not lost *me*. It was when thou didst love me alone that thou lost me. In the work of love that thou dost I shall always be with thee. Out of the eyes, from which thou hast dried the tears, my eyes will smile on thee; the mouth which thou feedest will be mine, for my voice will thank thee, and what thou givest in love, it shall be as to me thou gavest.

"Oh, my beloved, I tell thee the whole law of life is love! Love in a pure heart; love which is all for all; love in which self is forgotten; love, perfect, beautiful, is the beginning and end of all things."

Her voice grew softer, dying away like some strain of heavenly music; and her soulful eyes were looking lovingly at me.

For a moment I gazed at her. Her voice, lingering in my ears, was sweeter than earthly music. And then, as I tried to answer, the dream vanished and I awoke.

* * *

The grey dawn was breaking. I arose and bathed my face in the cool, fresh water. Then from the rose bush at my window I culled some rare white buds and dainty full roses, their perfume sweet and faint. Then I opened her room door, and crossed to her side. I looked at the beautiful face, but no longer with bitterness and sorrow in

my heart; for to me it seemed to take the radiant, glorified look she had worn in my dream, and as I should always think of her.

I kissed her gently, and laid the flowers on her bosom. Then I said softly, "The law of life is love; love in a pure heart; love which is all for all; love in which self is forgotten; love perfect, beautiful, is the beginning and end of all things. Father of all, help me to live that love!"

In the soft morning light, when all things were waking to another day, I gave one long, long look at my sleeping one; then turned away and left her with "Our Father, Who art in heaven."

Through the River

You! you to damn me—you, a man—
Have left me thus—Hate you?

I could kill you—but my soul is black enough.

God! I am drinking—drinking—Is there any deeper gall?

All the bitterness I have drunken,
All its blackness I have known—
Every hand is shut against me—
Every heart my blackness sees,

I, a woman, and am fallen—Oh, the hatred of it all.

Can there be light without a shadow?
Or a night without the day?
Can the world that made me, spurn me?
Turn from me its face away?

God, and mother! man and woman!

I alone know what I did.

Who are *you* that dare to judge me?

Help me—ah! you shrink away.

To you all I bid defiance,
I am but what I was made—
Did *you* try to bring me backwards?
Did *you* try to say me nay?
Nay, I, a woman, and am fallen,
So you say I am outcast,
Thing accursed, thing defiled—

Oh, great God, I ask Thee, hear me,
Wherefore came I here—and whence—
Oh, great God, above me, hear me,
Why, was I beset,
With the passions that have cast me
Into everlasting earthly hell?

Why—oh, why—am I unholy?
Answer me—oh God, I hate Thee
For the life that Thou didst give—
Take it back! unholy? maybe
Judged by standards men have made,
But before Thee, I stand wholly
Naked from my sins, and pure.

Judge me now—not outcast sinner—
But a woman, who has lived—
In the struggle she was beaten, trampled, and undone—
Enough—the bitterness has gone—
Alike the greatest suffering and joy have passed me
through—
In the still, deep, gleaming river,
Through the darkness, gleams a face—
Mother, mother, do you quiver
With great joy?—or as one abased?
I am coming, loving mother,
Through the river, through the dark,
Once, ah once, will rise—to thee.
Mother, fold your little lassie,
Fold her in your arms so true,
All the sinning—all the sorrow—
All the trials—all the pain.
Hush! I'm coming—
I, your little loving lassie. God! my mother—
I am pure again.

Chloroform.

Strange overpowering breath,
A god in a vapour:
Sleep-giver kinder than Death.

“Curious, strange, that contraction of pain”
The Doctor speaks soft—
“I have seen it again and again.”

Slowly the room fades away—
(Hold the cap closer)—
I sleep—laugh at pain’s sway—

Silent and still and serene;
Living yet dead—
I shall be as tho’ it never had been.

Strange overpowering breath,
A god in a vapour:
Sleep-giver kinder than Death.

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